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## COMMERCE AND CONQUEST

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**DARK DESTINY**

**MASQUE OF MUTINY**

**THE MAN WHO WAS TOO OLD**

*(in preparation)*

# COMMERCE AND CONQUEST

The Story of the Honourable  
East India Company by

C. LESTOCK REID

With a foreword by Field Marshal  
LORD BIRDWOOD OF ANZAC



LONDON  
C. & J. TEMPLE LIMITED

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## DEDICATED

In admiration to the Soldiers, Administrators  
and Merchant Adventurers who built up the  
Indian Empire; and in scorn to the politicians,  
British and Indian, who have destroyed it.

*First published by C. & J. Temple Ltd., 7 Noel Street  
London W. 1.*

*Made and printed in Great Britain by The Scottish  
County Press, Dalkeith.*

MCMXLVII

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*The Publishers wish to express their acknowledgments and thanks to the Superintendent of Records, India Office, whose kind permission and help enabled them to reproduce the pictures and documents in this book.*





From an engraving by George Vertue.

## FOREWORD

*Field Marshal Lord Birdwood of Anzac,  
G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,  
C.I.E., D.S.O., C.-in-C. Northern Command,  
India, 1920-1924. C.-in-C. Army in India,  
1925-1930.*

---

CLOSE personal links with old "John Company" are now naturally very few and far between. Though Major Lestock Reid was not born till years after it was wound up, it is very evident throughout this historical sketch that, as a grandson of one of the last Directors, he has inherited the feeling for Indian Service; and, what is of real value, has successfully conducted great research and shown great accuracy as regards the many facts and details so vividly described in these pages. Having himself worked with and among Indians in various civil and military capacities, he brings to his subject a peculiar comprehension of the conditions and peoples of India, as well as a keen sense of humour and great literary ability; and, as my family has also been very closely associated with India for five generations, I can fully enter into the spirit in which he writes.

The true history of the Honourable East India Company reads like an adventure story beside which the most lurid inventions of "blood and thunder" fiction seem, by comparison, dull and lifeless. Major Lestock Reid tells the wonderful story of the little band of Elizabethan merchants who, in their cockle-shell of a boat, set out on what they hoped would be at most a profitable trading venture; how their trade prospered and their numbers increased in spite of the rivalry of the Dutch, the Portuguese and, more serious, of the French; their tentative experiments in trade with the East Indies and Japan, and their ultimate concentration on India.

It is remarkable to trace in Major Reid's story how, little by little, the would-be-peaceful traders were compelled, in spite of

*themselves and quite contrary to their wishes and in defence of their right to trade, to take up arms, and how, having once armed, circumstances drove them on to be not merely defenders but aggressors.*

*As the years went by and the Company accumulated great wealth, controlled great fleets and great armies, and ruled over millions of subjects, Parliament awoke to the realisation that this commercial child, it had if not reared at least allowed to exist, had grown larger and even more magnificent than its imperial parents. Jealously they sought a reason for dissolving the Company and the excuse was provided by the outbreak in 1857 of the Indian Mutiny. But, not content with dissolving the Company, the author is of the opinion that they proceeded to undo the Company's work so that the Indian Empire was destroyed in less than half the time it took to build.*

*This, as I say, is the author's opinion, and whether or not one agrees with him he argues it well, and we know that not even the most deliberate historian can restrain himself from some display of feeling when he writes of a subject which is so near his heart. Those of us who have seen long service in India and love the country and her people can hardly be censured for a nostalgic regret for the great days when the British Raj was at the height of its power, and only the future can show whether entire abrogation of our responsibilities, duties and connections with India is the suicidal folly which Major Reid stamps it, or an act of supreme statesmanship. But, at least, let us*

*"Pray God our greatness may not fail  
Through craven fears of being great."*

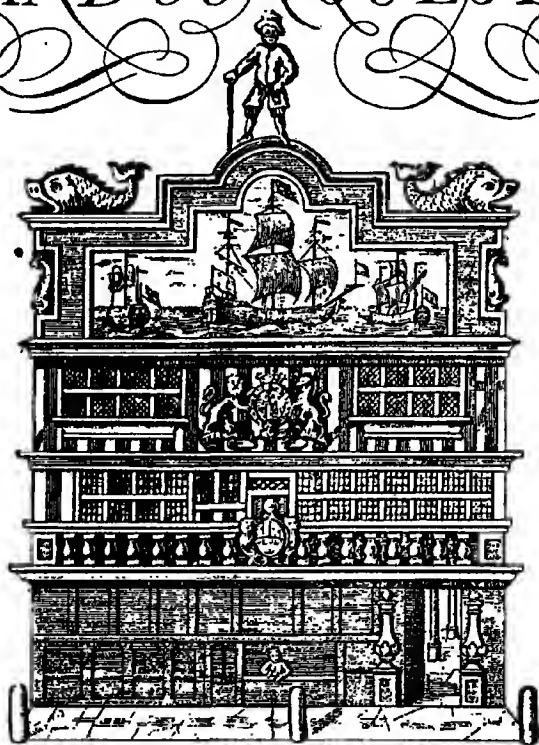
*In the main, however, this book is not a political treatise, but what it sets out to be—a history of the East India Company. As such, I consider it a most admirable study of a profoundly interesting subject; and, even though many of us may not hold with the severe criticisms of the final chapter, yet I feel sure all will value, as I do, this historical record.*

*Bindwood of Cuzco*  
*JM*

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# Commerce AND CONQUEST



Being a History of  
THE  
Honourable East India Company  
By C. LESTOCK REID





## CHAPTER ONE

### PRELUDE TO ADVENTURE

---

INDIA IS THE LAND of Invasion. Century after century, almost since the beginning of recorded time, one invasion after another has swept over the gigantic mountain wall that shields her off from Asia down to the rich Gangetic plain. First the Dravidians, a mysterious dark-skinned race from the Mediterranean area, who evolved quite a promising civilisation of their own in the Indus valley fifty crowded centuries ago. Then the Aryans, fair-skinned men from the North, wave upon wave of them in 1,500 years, becoming darker with the passage of years, evolving somehow that strange mixture of spirituality and sensuality which is the Hindu religion. Then the Greeks under Alexander the Great, who might well have conquered all India and changed the history of the world if his armies, home-sick and dispirited, had not mutinied and forced him to withdraw. Then the Mohammedans, at first raiders, then invaders, then fully-fledged conquerors, the great Moghuls—one of the most magnificent dynasties the world has ever seen.

Baber the Tiger founded that dynasty when he captured Delhi in 1525; and it seemed likely to endure for ever, but, by the end of the same century, a new invader had appeared on the scene, an invader

who came not with flurry of trumpets and flicker of unsheathed swords, but quietly and diffidently and unobtrusively, who came for commerce not conquest and who yet was to prove the greatest conqueror of them all.)

In 1583 four young men set out from London—Fitch, Newbery, Leedes and Storey. They were representatives—agents, in modern language—of the Turkey Company, which had been formed to trade with the Turkish Empire, then one of the Great Powers; their avowed intention was to pass beyond the domains of the Sultan and to open up a British Trade in the far, fabulous East, they were the first, and perhaps the greatest, of commercial travellers; and Queen Elizabeth, who approved of enterprising young men, gave them letters of introduction to mysterious and semi-mythical monarchs, the King of Cambay and the Emperor of China; it is doubtful whether at that time she had even heard of the Great Moghul.

It was a difficult and dangerous journey that they undertook: though travelling via Aleppo, the Euphrates valley and the Persian Gulf, they reached Ormuz without any definite mishap. But jealous eyes were upon them. Nearly 100 years previously the Pope, Alexander II, had drawn a line across the map of the world from the North Pole through the Azores to the South Pole, granting the lands West of the line to Spain and the lands East of the line to Portugal; granting, in other words, a monopoly of all trans-oceanic trade to the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. It was not of course his to grant, but the grantees, if no one else, took the Bull very seriously. The Portuguese, like the Spanish, were very jealous of their privileges and, hearing of the arrival of these interlopers, they arrested them and sent them in chains to Goa.

Here, to mutual surprise they met another Englishman, probably the first man of his race ever to live in India. But Thomas Stevens was no commercial tra-

veller. A devout Catholic, who saw no hope for his religion in England, he had joined the Jesuits in Rome and by them had been sent to Goa as Rector of the University in that strange, muddled, vicious colony. He had in fact become "naturalized" (or its mediaeval equivalent), but one may assume that he was delighted to hear his own tongue again. In any case he exerted all his considerable influence to secure the release of the prisoners and obtained posts in the colony for Newbery and Leedes; while Storey, possibly from fear, possibly from gratitude, joined the Jesuit fraternity. Fitch, however, was made of sterner stuff. He had come to see India and the East, and neither the pleadings of an English Priest nor the threats of a Portuguese Viceroy were going to stop him. He visited the Moghul court at Agra, then at the height of its power under Akbar, the greatest of the Moghuls, the greatest perhaps of all the rulers, Oriental or European, that India has yet seen; he went on to Burma and even further East—though he did not deliver his letters—and, alone of the quartet, he returned to England in 1591.

A very different England. He had left it a second-rate Power, shivering under the shadow of Spain. He returned to find it a great Power, at least in the making, which three years previously had dispelled that shadow for ever, with the defeat of the Armada. The whole nation was astir, suddenly conscious of its young strength, eager to expend it in new adventures and, as perhaps befitted a nation of shopkeepers, none were more eager than the merchants, chafing at the Papal ban which restricted their activities to Antwerp and some of the Levantine ports.

This appetite had been whetted by the return, only a few weeks after the last of Philip's great galleons had foundered on the fierce Irish coast, of Thomas Cavendish with his stories of China, "A country ye stateliness and richness of which I fear to report lest I should not be credited" and of "ye islands of ye Moluccus where our countrymen may

have trade as freely as ye Portugals if they themselves will"; by the letters of Thomas Stevens, who was a prolific and picturesque correspondent and had not failed to mention the arrival of Fitch and his friends; and now by the return of Fitch himself with his first-hand eyewitness account of the wealth and power of the Moghuls.

Here, verily, was the field for English commercial enterprise! To Hell with Papal Bulls and "Portugals"! Forget the North-West passage and the North-East passage and the overland road through Turkey! Concentrate on the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope!

Unfortunately their enthusiasm was to receive severe set-backs. Already, a few weeks before Fitch's return, an expedition had started, three ships under Captain George Raymond—to end in terrible and disastrous failure. Nothing daunted, they tried again and sent three more ships under Captain George Wood—which ended in failure even more complete and disastrous. This was distinctly discouraging. After all they were primarily merchants; they did want to see their money back. They scratched their beards and wondered if perhaps it would not be wiser to stick to the overland route, the more so as Elizabeth herself was in favour of it. She was no longer the brilliant red-haired hussy of earlier days, but an ageing woman who wanted only to live at peace with her neighbours, especially, curiously enough, Spain.

But Fitch, we may be sure, was forever assaulting their ears with tales of the incredible wealth of India. So was James Lancaster, who had sailed with Cavenish and sailed with Raymond, and, in spite of that tragedy, was eager to sail again. So were many others, Drake's men and Hawkins' men, and Pretty and Pers and Baffin, firing the imagination of the younger members of the Guilds. And, while the merchants listened and were tempted and hesitated again, another competitor appeared on the scene. To

some purpose. In the last four years of the century, the Dutch, the cautious, slow-moving Dutch, who had but recently freed themselves from the yoke of Spain, sent no fewer than ten expeditions, practically every ship they could raise, to the Indies and proved conclusively that the "Portugals" had only touched the fringes of the vast treasure-house that was the East. If there is one thing guaranteed to shake the Englishman out of his complacency it is competition : specially when it is aggravated by a touch of patronage, as evinced by the tactless offer from their very competitors to buy or charter for their newly-acquired Indian trade English ships lying idle in the Thames. This was too much. The Guilds returned a very curt answer.

"Our Merchants of London have need of all our ships and have none to sell to the Dutch. We ourselves intend forthwith to have trade with the Indies."

They did. They subscribed the rather odd sum of £30,133 6s. 8d. One John Mildenhall offered to start at once for India to make a commercial treaty with the Great Moghul, against the arrival of the British ships, and Elizabeth, with her passion for corresponding with exotic potentates, gave him a letter to the Emperor Akbar ; by this time she had heard all about the Moghuls from Fitch. And (on September 24th, 1599, a formal meeting was held in Founders' Hall.

The East India Company was born.) But, like many another infant destined to grow to enormous stature, its early days were difficult. It was one thing to get the Queen to write charming non-committal letters to Monarchs too remote to affect her policies, quite another to induce her to grant a charter which would undoubtedly irritate a monarch who was far too close, Philip of Spain. Yet without a formal charter no trading was possible.

But the merchants persevered. They were the sort of men who would persevere, men like Richard Staper, who had founded the Levant Company ; John

Eldred, one of the richest men in the city ; Sir John Hart ; Alderman Halliday ; Richard Cockayne and many other shining lights of Tudor commerce, a shrewd, hard-headed practical group, coloured and enlivened and toughened by the out-and-out adventurers, the Fitches and Lancasters and the like. In spite of the vacillations of the Queen who, with the usual feminine desire to eat her cake and have it, wanted to please the Guilds and yet not offend Philip ; in spite of the polite obstruction of the Treasury, which seems to have altered singularly little during the centuries ; in spite of the nervous hesitation of the Privy Council, who, far more than the Queen, feared to offend Philip, they got their charter.

On December 31st, 1600, 215 men, headed by the Earl of Cumberland who held one share (the first guinea-pig director ?), became the "Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies," were granted for fifteen years the monopoly of trade "into the countries and ports of Asia and Africa and into and from all the islands, ports, towns and places of Asia, Africa and America or any of them beyond the Cape of Buena Esperanza or the Straits of Magellan where any traffic may be used."

They had already, in boldly confident anticipation, purchased four ships, the *Susan*, *Hector*, *Ascension* and, as flag-ship, the *Mare Scourge* of 600 tons, bought for £3,700 from the same enterprising Earl of Cumberland and renamed the *Red Dragon* ; already paid one Altham £4 for drawing up the patent of privileges of the "Society of Adventurers to the East Indies," the first title suggested : had already designed a trade-mark for their goods ; though it was not until four months later that they were granted a Coat of Arms whereon three ships in full sail were tactfully combined with the Tudor Roses : and, most important of all, had already elected a Governor of the Company, Alderman Thomas Smythe, together with twenty-four directors and chosen a "General"

for their fleet in the dauntless Lancaster, who thus attained his ambition to sail once again those "perilous seas in faery lands forlorn."

Three things yet remained to be done. Firstly, the irksome but inevitable necessity of raising more money, as the ships and their equipment alone had swallowed up more than the original £30,133 (to say nothing of the 6s. 8d.) ; and some of the bolder spirits, impatient of the slowness with which money trickled in, out of their own pockets raised the capital to £68,000, a considerable sum in those days. Secondly the polite and politic necessity of getting the Queen to write some more letters ; and Her Majesty was ready to oblige, but, having, presumably, by this time become a little tired of writing letters which were never delivered, contented herself with producing a series of duplicate letters, in which the name of the recipient was left blank, to be filled in by the General, and which extolled, rather cleverly, the advantages of trading with the English rather than "the saide Portuguese." And lastly the obvious necessity of selecting the captain's officers and factors or agents.

But, at last, all was ready. On February 13th, 1601, the little fleet, the whole of which could be packed quite comfortably into the *Queen Mary*, weighed anchor in the Thames, sailing away, gallantly and all unconsciously, to found an Empire.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ADVANCE IN INDIA

---

CAPTAIN LANCASTER and his fleet reached Achin in Sumatra on June 5th, 1602. The Dutch and the Portuguese were there before him, but Queen Elizabeth's letter, the blanks duly filled in, backed as it was by some tawdry but rich presents, greatly impressed the King of Achin who was induced to sign in return an equally high-sounding treaty, drawn up by Lancaster himself, in which the King declared that "we have entertained into our friendship and Holy league our well-beloved Serinissima Reina de Englaterra (Lancaster's Portuguese seems to have been a little shaky) to hold and keep true and faithful league with her according to the commendable course and law of all nations" and granted to the English extensive trading privileges.

The document, still in existence, is interesting as being the first treaty ever made between the East India Company and a native ruler, but it was of little practical use to the enterprising Lancaster. The King's actual power was by no means equal to his readiness to oblige, while the Dutch and the Portuguese were in possession of most of the pepper and spices, and had no intention whatever of parting with them.

But the Elizabethan business man had one great

advantage over his modern successor ; if legitimate trading failed, he could always fall back on downright piracy. Lancaster did. He calmly seized a Portuguese ship and appropriated her real cargo, thus at any rate ensuring a profitable voyage.

Further, however ruthless they might be to their fellow Europeans, the English had at least the wisdom or the inherent decency to treat the natives well. They might, and did, only pay them for their spices a fortieth of the price they expected to get in London, but at least they did not, like the Portuguese, who mixed up religion, commerce and imperialism into one unholy mess, condemn them "to the thumbscrew and the rack for the glory of the Lord," nor deliberately set out to squeeze them dry as did the Dutch ; so that Lancaster, using bribery before coercion, tact rather than torture, contrived to make a second treaty with the King of Bantam, where he founded a "factory" (as trading-stations were called in those days), and was able, as a result of this odd mixture of good and bad behaviour so typical of the times, to return with his ships intact—though he had lost heavily in personnel chiefly from scurvy—and more than a million pounds' worth of spices in their holds.

He reached England in September, 1603, which was a bad moment to arrive. The Directors had hardly recovered from a futile and expensive attempt to discover the North-West Passage ; and, worst of all, Queen Elizabeth, who in her heart at any rate was always ready to encourage adventure, had died in April.

The Directors and the mercantile community in general were not very optimistic about her successor, but herein they turned out to be wrong. James I might be "the wisest fool in Christendom," but at any rate he was not such a fool as to be blind to the possibilities of Eastern Trade. A second expedition consisting of the same four ships, this time under the command of Captain Henry Middleton, set out in

March, 1604, and returned in May, 1606, all except the *Susan* wrecked off the African coast, and the two voyages together showed a profit of 95 per cent. That was good enough for King James. He might have an unfortunate (from the Directors' point of view) habit of granting rather similar charters to gentlemen of his court, but he was shrewd enough to see that these gallants would probably do more harm than good;\* and on May 31st, 1609, he granted a fresh charter, handing out to the Company "the whole entire and only trade and traffic to the East Indies," not as Elizabeth had done, for fifteen years, but for ever; though, with true Scots caution, he added a rider to the effect that all these privileges could be withdrawn on three years' notice if Company's ventures "should not prove profitable to the realm." As it turned out, a quite unnecessary precaution; few "realms" have ever had a more profitable investment than the East India Company.

Meanwhile a third expedition had set out on March 12th, 1607, consisting of the *Dragon*, *Hector*, and *Consent*, commanded respectively by William Keeley, William Hawkins, and David Middleton, younger brother of Henry; and, in the long term view, this was the most important voyage yet. For, after the usual visit to Bantam, Captain Hawkins, acting on instructions from the Company, sailed in the *Hector* to Surat and, leaving his ship in the Tapti river, proceeded to Agra to interview the Great Moghul Jehangir, Akbar's son and successor.

Actually he never saw Jehangir, who was far more interested in drinking bouts and dancing girls than in the prosaic business of running a kingdom, but at least the English had got a foothold in India, precarious though it might be; and, once assured of their new charter and of royal support, the Com-

---

\* They certainly did. In 1604 Sir Edward Michelbourne, whose efforts to enter the Company the Directors had rebuffed time and again, committed a flagrant act of piracy on Bantam which embittered Anglo-Dutch relations for decades to come.

pany took energetic steps to enlarge that foothold. They raised more money, the not inconsiderable sum of £82,000; they built new ships, including the happily named *Trade's Increase*, the largest merchantman afloat, and they put Sir Henry Middleton (as he now was), the greatest of the commercial captains of the day, in command.

But the Portuguese had not been idle either. They had greatly strengthened their own position in Surat, and, after a certain amount of fighting and a great deal of fruitless negotiations with the native governor, Middleton was forced to retreat.

Undaunted, the Company tried again, went on trying until, in 1612, Captain Best in the old *Dragon*, that had so often sailed those seas, and Captain Pettie in the *Hoscander*, defeated the Portuguese at Swally in a sea fight which Drake would have approved. Landing they found that their agent, Aldworth, had at long last received from Jehangir a promise "for kind usage of the English, free trade and so forth" and permission to build a factory at Surat. Which the Company promptly proceeded to do. But Aldworth, a shrewd appraiser of Oriental character, took the precaution to keep one William Edwards permanently at Agra as a kind of consul or commercial attache "which will be needful among this inconstant people." He seems to have appraised the Oriental character very shrewdly.

Meanwhile Captain Anthony Hippon in the *Globe* had started factories at Pettapoli in the Bay of Bengal and at Masulipatam on the coast of Madras. The first stones had been laid of the mighty structure which was to be the Indian Empire.

But mighty structures require careful builders and, almost as if they had some faint premonition of the task before them, the Company proceeded to put their own house in order. By the terms of Elizabeth's charter, they were bound to dispatch one expedition a year, and those terms they had faithfully carried out. With the result, in those days of slow travel,

that one expedition left before the previous one returned, so that there was no co-ordination, no digesting of valuable lessons, each expedition being, so to speak, in a compartment of its own, depending entirely on the whim of individual captains for its destination, conduct and purpose, and their captains were very independent gentlemen, most of the time out of reach of instructions from London, who could, and very often did, quarrel furiously with each other.

None of this was exactly helpful. Accordingly in 1612, encouraged thereto by their new charter and with the idea of remedying these obvious defects, the Directors transformed themselves into a Joint Stock Company with the enormous (for those days) capital of £429,000 to be expended in new voyages, under definite instructions from the Governor and Deputy Governor. The new plan bore fruit immediately. The first of these "Joint Stock voyages" as they were called, was fortified by a Royal Commission from James I, now definitely interested in Eastern trade, and arrived at Surat on October 15, 1614, to find a very pretty little quarrel brewing between the Portuguese and the local Nawab or Governor.

Captain Downton in command, a bold and resolute man who did not like the "Portugals"—few English did in the 17th century—saw his chance and seized it. He backed the Nawab.

That worthy probably thought the backing of no great value, as Downton had only four ships and 600 men as against the Portuguese fleet collected at Goa, which consisted of six large gallions, some lesser ships and about sixty native barges, carrying in all 134 guns and nearly 9,000 men, of whom 2,600 were Portuguese. But he did not know the English nor their amazing habit of winning battles against fantastic odds. Downton, quite undismayed, took up the challenge and, in a sea-fight that lasted three weeks, utterly defeated the Portuguese. The Nawab was delighted, as indeed he had cause to be, and presented Downton with his own sword with "hilt

of massive gold.”\* The Moghul Emperor Jehangir was also delighted and wrote, saying : “ his country was before them (the English) to do therein whatever they desired.” But the Company’s agents knew their Jehangir, knew also that the Portuguese, especially the Jesuits, were constantly intriguing against them at Agra, and Aldworth, that intelligent man, had already written to London urging them to send out “ a sufficient man—that may be Resident in Agra with the King,” and who might “ prevent any plottes that may be wrought by the Jesuits to circumvent our trade.” It seemed an excellent idea, and James I, approached by the Company, appointed as his Envoy Extraordinary, Sir Thomas Roe, “ a gentleman of pregnant understanding, well-spoken, learned, industrious, of a comely personage.” He was also a man who stood no nonsense, as the Nawab of Surat, who had by this time forgotten his gratitude, and the Viceroy of Goa, who had certainly not forgotten his Anglophobia, soon learnt, but for all that he was not perhaps the best person to deal with Jehangir. The Emperor was a debauchee, the Ambassador something of a prude, and the two seldom mix.

The latter in fact thoroughly disapproved of the former. As a man he refused to drink bottle for bottle with the thirsty monarch, though as an Ambassador he hastily instructed the Company to send out many cases of the best Burgundy, for “ never were men more enamoured of red wine ” than the Moghuls : and he nearly jumped out of his respectable skin when Jehangir sent him as a present and, one feels sure, as a joke—Baber bequeathed a very lively sense of humour to most of his descendants—a beautiful dancing girl, whom Sir Thomas promptly returned. It is one of the disappointments of history

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\* It was all the reward Downton was to receive for his exploit, for he died of fever a few months later at Bantam before he could return to England and collect the honours rightly awaiting the first of the Empire builders in India,

that the lady's views on the whole transaction have never been recorded.

But, whatever his foibles, Roe was a very shrewd observer. He summed up the whole Moghul Empire in one pithy sentence, "Religions infinite, laws none," and, long before anyone else dreamed that such an Empire could ever collapse, prophesied that within a short time "all these kingdoms would be in combustion." He was also a very stubborn man. He had come to obtain a treaty, and a treaty he was going to have. Through all the Emperor's characteristically Oriental twists and evasions, he stuck firmly to that one important point and persistence succeeded where diplomacy—or lack of it—failed.

(In September, 1618, Jehangir finally signed a treaty, a treaty very advantageous to the Company, which was granted freedom to trade and to open factories in any part of the Moghul Empire, were protected against any delay or extortions by native officials and were ensured of a supply of transport and provisions at reasonable charges). Sir Thomas, we may be sure, heaved a sigh of relief and thankfully set sail for home and respectability, pleasantly conscious that he had successfully carried out a difficult and uncongenial task.

As indeed he had.

## RETREAT IN THE INDIES

---

IF THE KING and the Company and Sir Thomas himself were pleased, the Portuguese were not, but, as Downton's success had been almost the last blow to a power already fast declining, their displeasure was of little consequence.

Nor were the Dutch, and this was a very different proposition. They had taken full advantage of that unfortunate five years' hesitation on the part of the English merchants at the close of the 16th century, they were steadily ousting the Portuguese from their Eastern possessions, and, by 1614, as against the one English factory founded by Lancaster at Bantam, they had a dozen or more scattered up and down the East Indies and a far larger fleet.

The English, finding themselves up against a brick wall of hatred (intensified by the Michelbourne affair) and superior strength, had tried nearer home. They had tried along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, but only succeeded in embroiling themselves thoroughly with the Turks—though Aden remains as a proof that the effort was not entirely unsuccessful. They had coquetted with the "gaudy realme" of Persia, a project of which Sir Thomas Roe at first disapproved, rightly, and later was persuaded to approve, wrongly, for it never came to very much.



They had also tried further afield. As far back as 1598, a Kentishman, William Adams, had joined one of the Dutch expeditions as pilot major, and two years later was wrecked with his ship on the coast of Japan. Japan had not yet entered upon that extraordinary period of self-imposed isolation which was to have such a bearing on her subsequent history, and Adams, instead of being shot out of hand as he gloomily anticipated, was brought before the Emperor. The divine Iyeyasu took a great fancy to him, which Adams repaid by making himself extremely useful as a shipbuilder and teacher of navigation; so useful in fact that the Emperor refused to let him go home, comforting him with a Japanese wife and an estate "like unto a lordship in England."

But Adams longed for the sight of English faces, the sound of the English tongue, and was delighted to hear of the arrival of English merchants in Java. Moved by "love of my countrymen and my country," he wrote in 1611 to the Company, setting out the commercial possibilities of Japan, in which he said, "there is not a land better governed by civic policy," and praising the Japanese, whom he described as being "of good nature, courteous above measure and valiant in war."

The Company, deeply interested in the possibility of stealing a march on the Dutch, took Adams into their service at a salary of £100 a year—which seems rather niggardly pay for a man in his unique position—and a factory was opened at Firando, on the Japanese coast, where the Dutch and the Portuguese were already established. But the effort soon petered out. In 1616 a new Emperor withdrew most of the trading facilities granted to Europeans, and the Japanese became steadily more exclusive, until two centuries later, Commodore Perry and the guns of an American squadron smashed their self-imposed isolation willy-nilly, forcing them to enter the modern world—to the great detriment of everyone concerned.

Efforts to trade with the mainland of China had

been no more successful, a company of traders under Peacock being wiped out to the last man in revenge, it was said, for "a great quantity of false dollars bartered away by the Hollanders for commodities."

It almost seemed as if Destiny were compelling the English to concentrate on India : but that did not mean that they were prepared to leave the Dutch in uninterrupted enjoyment of the Spice Islands. Yet both sides had to proceed with extreme caution. The alliance between Protestant England and Protestant Holland was vital to both parties, they could not afford to quarrel openly in Europe, so they quarrelled furiously, if not exactly openly, in the East. Fifty years later a disillusioned factor, hearing of one of Charles II's half-hearted efforts at hostilities, remarked bitterly, "England again fighting the Dutch ! Why we in the Indies have been fighting them with tongue and fist, sword and pistol, ever since my grandfather was a Company's ship 'prentice."

A very true remark.

For the early history of Anglo-Dutch relations in the East is a sordid story of recriminations and counter recriminations, of piracy whenever opportunity offered, of furtive fighting and unofficial and, rarely, official war, of the English determined to get a footing in the Spice Islands, of the Dutch equally determined to keep them out and gain for themselves a footing in India which, indeed, they succeeded doing at Surat in 1617.

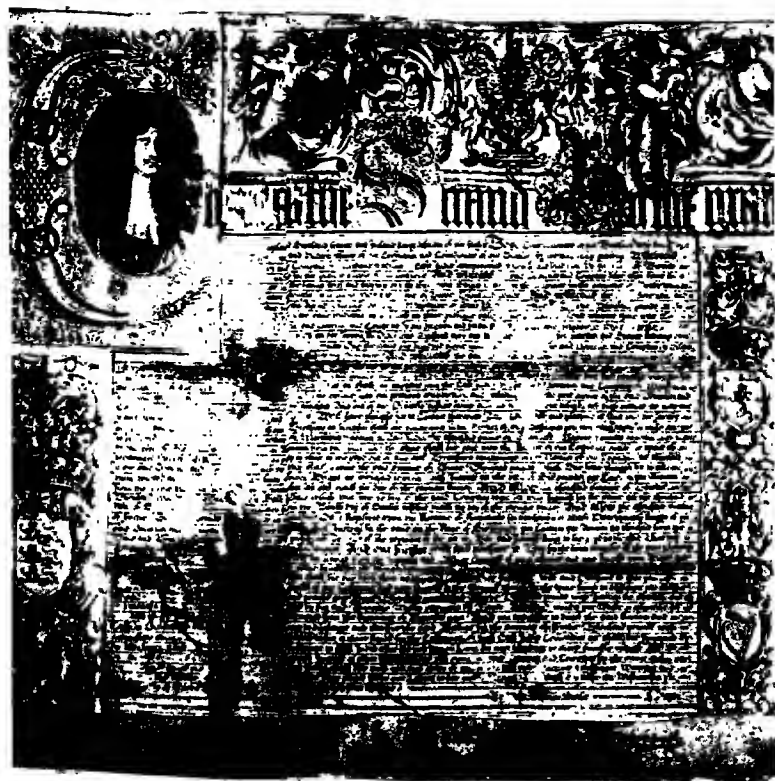
This spurred the English to greater efforts, but they met their match in the new Dutch Governor-General of the East Indies. Van Coen, a forceful if unpleasant personality, pursued a policy of exclusion, which consisted in warning the English off every island in the East Indies, which he was better able to do, thanks to the fact that the opening of a new factory at Jaccatra had practically given him control of all Java ; then as now the strategic centre of the Archipelago.

There was very little that the English could do about that. The Directors considered all sorts of possibilities : including the fantastic scheme of marrying to " the King of Sumatra " (actually merely King of Achin) the daughter of one of their number, " a gentlewoman of most excellent parts for music, her needle and good discourse, as also very beautiful and personable," a description which no doubt highly intrigued the monarch in question. Again one would dearly like to know what the lady thought of it all, but in any case the Church put its foot down and forbade the banns. The factors complained frequently and bitterly to the King, to the Director, to anyone who would listen to them against " the broad-beamed Hollanders who daily persecute us, making us long for vengeance," and Van Coen replied with a long list of accusations against the agents, equally virulent and considerably less truthful. The Company retaliated by sending out in their expedition of 1618, six fully armed ships under Sir Thomas Dale, with instructions (presumably secret) to teach the Dutch a lesson : which he proceeded to do by capturing Jaccatra.

But this was *open* war, and open war was just what neither power could afford in the then state of Europe. Matters were hastily patched up by a compact which set up a Council of Defence, composed of four English and four Dutch members, to regulate affairs in the East Indies under the general arrangement of free trade for all and a mutual sharing of expenses. It was an impracticable arrangement at the best, and it was not improved by the fact that Van Coen at any rate had no intention whatever of keeping it. He charged every possible—and impossible—item to the English account, he obstructed, where he did not simply stop, English efforts to trade, he treated the English worse than the natives, which was saying a great deal, and the whole sorry business ended in 1623 with the infamous massacre at Amboyna where Van Speult, acting on Van Coen's



The Emperor Shah Jahan and his court  
*Old Indian watercolour*



*Letters Patent from Charles II for the payment, by instalments, of £92,000  
due to the East India Company  
7th October 1672*

made this arrangement just possible was, in fact, conspicuous by its absence.

Thus to give a few instances : in 1624 the Dutch, whose general behaviour all over the East in those early days was a blot on their entire history, seized some innocent and unarmed native ships carrying pilgrims to Mecca. Jehangir was, not unnaturally, furious, his local governors and officers, anxious to please him and as yet incapable of distinguishing one white man from another, came down on Surat, flung the factors into gaol and impounded their property. It cost the Company a pretty penny in bribes to rescue the one and retrieve the other. A year later, Van Speult, the villain of Amboyna, became the Dutch Governor of Surat and, though he fortunately died in 1627, the factors in self-defence, and further exasperated by the evacuation of Batavia, urged the Company to give up lesser factories, to concentrate on Surat and the Coromandel Coast, where they opened a new factory at Armagon.

The Portuguese, too, were being extremely troublesome, not only in Persia (one of the Company's less successful side-shows), until in 1631 a sea-fight in Swally Roads, reminiscent of the brave days of Captain Downton, put a temporary end to their aggressiveness.

And so on. The Company neither expected nor received any co-operation from their rivals in India and, whatever they may have expected, they did not receive much co-operation or support from the Government at home. Perhaps not surprisingly, for the Government was anything but stable. Charles I was no doubt full of the best intentions towards the Company, but unfortunately his chronic lack of money far outweighed his good intentions. If he gave protection, he expected to be paid for it. If he bought pepper, he did not expect to pay for it. He was not above breaking, for a consideration, the monopoly of Eastern trade enjoyed by the Company for the past thirty-five years and granting fresh rights to commercial pirates like Sir William Courteen and

John Weddell, a servant of the Company who had turned against his employers.

It is conceivable that the Directors were not unduly grieved when Charles' efforts landed him in Civil War. But civil wars are difficult times for honest traders : and the Company owed a good deal to their Governor, Sir William Cockayne, who steered a zig-zag but effective course between the Scylla of being too Cavalier and the Charybdis of being too Roundhead—for after all there might be a Restoration.

Nor did the execution of King Charles exactly increase English prestige abroad. The Shah of Persia, himself by no means a model of kingly virtues, condemned the English for that act as "a base, contemptible, unworthy nation"; and he was quite probably right. The Dutch thought they saw the opportunity finally to oust their rival from India ; and proved to be entirely wrong. Oliver Cromwell was a revolutionary and a regicide, but within the limits of his curious convictions he was a patriotic Englishman, quick to see the advantages to England of Eastern trade and business-like enough to realise that such advantages could only accrue if such trade were properly organised and freed from internecine strife. He practically forced Courteen's Association, the Assada Merchants, and other trespassers in the Company's preserves to forego rivalry and join the Company to which he granted a new charter in 1657. The Directors breathed a sigh of relief ; they had been likely to founder, but now saw calm waters ahead. And then the Restoration did come and they were plunged into anxiety again. Unnecessarily, as it turned out. Cockayne had played his cards well, and Charles II was not the man to bear malice (even if there had been cause for malice) against anyone who was likely to supply him with money. A present of gold plate worth £3,000 and the promise of loans \* to come, smoothed away any

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\* They amounted to £170,000 in the next sixteen years.

Royal rancour there may have been and the charter was once more renewed.

Nor did the two great domestic tragedies of the reign, the Plague and the Fire, affect the Company very severely. "God," in the words of one of the Directors, "was pleased to be very favourable to the Company's interests": perhaps He was a shareholder.

But, through all these twists and turns of fortune at home, the Company went steadily on building up its trade in India, seizing every opportunity to open new trading stations. (In 1639, Francis Day, finding Armagon impossible for a variety of reasons, transferred to a new and more promising site at a place called Madraspatam; soon to be shortened to Madras. The Company's Surat doctor, Roger Boughton, cured Jehanira, the favourite daughter of the Emperor Shah Jehan, and as a reward the Company was granted its first holding in Bengal at Balasore near the future site of Calcutta.) In 1650, Captain Jeremy Blackman reorganised Surat and put an end, at least temporarily, to the system of private trading by the factors which had been very harmful to the Company's interests.

(In 1662, Catharine of Braganza, on her marriage to Charles II, brought as part of her dowry the Island of Bombay,) which the contemporary chroniclers, with more truth than tact, described as "a pestilential swamp." Charles II had no use for pestilential swamps at the best of times, and was further incensed by "the knavery of the Portugal Viceroy" (as Pepys called it) and the uncomfortable feeling that he had been "choused by the Portugalls" (Pepys again), who, indeed, in contravention of the marriage treaty, excluded the neighbouring islands of Salsette and Tannah from the gift, and refused to allow the Earl of Marlborough, sent out to take possession, to land at all. The King tired of the whole business and handed over "Bombain" to the Company "to be holden in free and common socage



on payment of the annual rental of £10 a year in gold"; and the Company, who were inured to pestilential swamps, gladly accepted the gift as a site for yet another factory.)

(All their advances were commercial, the buildings factories rather than forts, the men who built them clerks rather than captains, every action that the Directors took was intended only to ensure an increase of trade.) "Commerce" was still their motto, but the inexorable furnace of events was already forcing them willy-nilly to conquest.

Shah Jehan had been defeated in 1658 by his younger son, Aurungzeb, an ambitious Prince whose ability was not equal to his complete lack of scruple; already it was becoming obvious that Sir Thomas Roe would prove a true prophet: and "Kingdoms in combustion" are unsatisfactory places in which to carry on business. The Dutch, still hostile, had to some extent compensated for their defeat at home by victories in the East—as for instance in the Persian Gulf in 1654, when they captured three of the Company's ships. Even the Portuguese, decadent and enfeebled though they might be, could still turn nasty at times, as the cession of Bombay had showed.

Finally, (the most dangerous European competitor the English were to face in India now appeared on the scene, in the shape of the French who set up their first factories at Chandernagore and Pondicherry in 1674.) (Even the most obstinate "business-man" amongst the Directors must have begun to realise that contracts and cash-books were no longer sufficient, they must be supplemented and enforced by armed aggression and armed defence.)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONQUEST IN EMBRYO

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**A**CTUALLY THE MEN on the spot, the factors and agents and presidents, had foreseen this necessity for some time past and had tentatively tried to pursue a more militant policy. (As early as 1627 they had started to fortify Surat. Seven years later they strengthened Armagon with 12 cannon and 23 soldiers, which seems a slightly inadequate garrison. Francis Day, when he founded his factory at Madras, also built Fort St. George to protect it, pleading for 100 soldiers as a garrison.) much to the annoyance of the Directors at home, who as yet did not see any point in spending money on such unbusiness-like trifles as soldiery and cannon.

They were soon to learn. The kingdoms were already "in combustion." The Moghuls were no longer unquestioned lords of India. The Mahrattas, Hindu hill tribes of the Western Ghats, had grown from detached guerilla bands into a military confederacy which, under their great leader, Sivaji, was already aiming at supremacy. In 1664 Sivaji attacked Surat itself—and was repulsed by Sir John Oxendon, whom the Company had recently appointed Presi-

dent of Surat and all their factories in Northern India.\*

Aurangzeb, delighted to find that Sivaji was not invincible, granted further trading concessions. The Directors were also delighted—though with the concessions rather than the victory which had produced them—and began dimly to realise that armed defence was not necessarily wanton extravagance. But they were very hesitant about it. They ordered Sir Edward Winter, Oxendon's colleague on the East coast, to strengthen the fortifications of Madras and then recalled him for so doing : or tried to do so, for Winter flatly refused to leave. Similarly, they allowed Aungier, who succeeded Oxendon, to fortify Bombay, but refused to send him properly trained officers, because, as they naively remarked, "we know that it is natural to engineers to contrive curiosities that are very expensive." These "curiosities" might have saved Surat in 1670, when Sivaji made a second and more fruitful attempt, though the factory itself was gallantly and successfully defended by Streynsham Master, Oxendon's nephew, whom Aungier had left in charge there.

In short, the Directors were still concerned with commerce not conquest, and, though they were being forced to admit more and more, albeit with extreme reluctance, that soldiers were necessary, they were very careful to subordinate their military to their commercial authorities. But with characteristic vacillation they gave orders that their writers or clerks should learn the rudiments of soldiering and, if they displayed any particular aptitude, were to be so to speak seconded and given commissions.†

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\* He received a salary of £800 p.a., which in those days was a very handsome salary indeed, specially as it carried a further bonus of £200 to "remove all temptation to engage in private trade."

† An accidentally far-sighted measure which half a century later was to provide one of the greatest soldiers India, and perhaps the world, has ever seen, Robert Clive.

Altogether it was a timid and half-hearted policy which, had it been persevered in, would probably have ruined the Company commercially; would most certainly have precluded the possibility of an empire. Fortunately it was not persevered in. In 1682 the Company found a new Governor who drastically altered and strengthened the outlook of the Council of Directors, who was, in fact, though he had never held that title, never set foot in the East, the first Governor-General of India; the first of that magnificent sequence of Empire builders who helped to make Great Britain the first nation in the world.

Josiah Child, a big florid man (to judge from his portrait) with bold staring eyes and a strong, tight-lipped mouth, had held a naval appointment under Cromwell and had so successfully contrived to make his peace with Charles II, that the latter created him a Baronet. Which at least proves his shrewdness, a shrewdness now devoted to the affairs of the Company. His first task was to strengthen it at home. Part of the vacillations described above were at least partially due to the fact that a Governor by the rules of Cromwell's charter held office for two years only, instead of for life or until he retired of his own free will, a plan which was not conducive either to boldness or initiative. These two-year men were merchants not statesmen. An Empire was theirs, ripe for the plucking and, afraid to pluck it themselves, they broke, by perpetual criticism and cheese-paring, the hearts of their more far-sighted representatives. Men like Aungier, who died of it; men like Keigwin, in command of the garrison in Bombay, who revolted and made himself Governor in flat defiance of orders from home. Yet another factor making for weakness was that private traders, quiescent immediately after the Restoration, had by 1680 again become very active, were competing strongly in India and at home, setting up an opposition which was ultimately to become a rival Corporation.

Into this Augean stable of muddle and faint-heartedness, Child came like a new Hercules. One of the first men to perceive the uses of popular propaganda, he published under the *nom de plume* "Philopatris," a series of pamphlets vigorously underlining the value of Eastern trade to the country as a whole. In the Court of Committees (as the Board of Directors was now called), he led a monopolist minority against the free trade majority under Thomas Papillon and won the day for his party and the Governorship of the Company for himself—with no intention whatever of relinquishing it in two years. Sure of his own position, he instructed the Company's servants in India to seize all such "interlopers," and, to ensure his orders being carried out, appointed his own brother; John, a man as forceful as himself and with thirty years of Indian experience into the bargain, President of Surat.

The two brothers proved a very strong combination. Josiah broke an incipient revolt against the Company's authority in St. Helena, John dealt as drastically with Keigwin's insubordination in Bombay (though it is pleasing to learn that he had a drink with him immediately afterwards), both of them perceived and pressed forward the Imperial idea.

In 1685 the King of Golconda appealed to the English in Madras to help him against Aurungzeb. Here was the first chance of putting into practice that ancient precept of "*Divide et impera*," which more than anything else has, in 250 years, given a tiny island in the North Sea control of a vast sub-continent in the Indian Ocean. Help, the brothers agreed, might certainly be granted, provided his Majesty paid in advance and provided he was told "in plain terms" that the Company, while admitting his claims to kingship in general, did not in particular admit for one moment his rule over "the small territory belonging to Madras of which we claim the sovereignty and will maintain and defend against all persons and govern by our own laws without any appeal to any

prince or potentate whatsoever": and, by way of making certain that they could "maintain and defend" their property, ordered that Fort St. George should be so fortified as to "be terrible against the assault of any Indian Prince and the Dutch power of India." Further, as a concession to the commercial instinct, they enjoined that "the inhabitants pay the full charge of all repairs and fortifications," because they "do live easier under our Government than under any Government in Asia or indeed under any Government in the known part of the world."

Then, as now, that remark was entirely true. Then, as now, a certain section of the native population refused to believe it and, led by the Brahmins, protested vehemently against the tax until they were threatened with expulsion if they did not pay. Whereupon they realised that they did "live easier" under the English than under any other conceivable Government and with belated wisdom withdrew their opposition.

The brothers were now firmly in the saddle. Having made Madras into a sovereign independent state, they turned their attention to Bombay, transferring thereto the seat of Government (with John in it) from Surat, which was reduced to its original status of a factory: and then proceeded successfully to claim that first prerogative of sovereign states, the right to coin their own money.

It was a right the Company had frequently demanded from the native Princes, who had always firmly refused. James II was more obliging, and in April, 1686, granted letters patent authorising the Company "to coin any specie in their forts usually coined by the Princes of the Country" and adjuring them to "take particular care that the coins in stamps, inscriptions and fineness should resemble those issued by the Mogul and Rajahmahl, particularly the rupees."

It was reasonably certain that Aurungzeb would be considerably (and perhaps justifiably) annoyed by

this very decided encroachment on his own royal prerogative: but, as the brothers had obviously already made up their minds to fight Aurungzeb in any case, that did not much matter.

Josiah was indeed getting more and more imbued with the idea of conquest, though he still paid lip-service to commerce. "Though our business," he wrote in 1684, "is only trade and security, yet we dare not trade boldly or leave great stocks where we have not the security of a fort." And the excuse was not merely specious, it was all too true. Already India was plunging into that long chaotic nightmare which the Indians themselves call "the century of anarchy"; already the war between Moghuls and Mahrattas was sweeping wider and wider over the miserable land; already the outlying parts of Aurungzeb's empire were beginning to break away; to ignore the Emperor's edicts.

Bengal was a case in point, and it was in Bengal that the Court of Committees, egged on by Child, decided to take their next great step forward. The Company had a factory far up the Hugli, the French and Dutch had factories near the mouth. If the Company retreated under pressure of Shaista Khan, the Nawab (Governor), it would mean that the Bengal trade would fall into the hands of their European rivals. Neither of the Childs had the faintest intention of allowing that to happen, they preferred to resist the "infidels of Northern India" with the sword, and in 1686 quite a respectable force was sent out to the Company's Bengal agent, Job Charnock—1,000 men and ten armed ships.

At least the Directors thought it "a respectable force"; it is open to doubt whether Charnock thought so, knowing as he did that the Nawab had 40,000 men. But he had all that contempt for odds which is one of the abiding miracles of the history of the English in India. He defeated Shaista Khan in a pitched battle and then, deciding that he was too far from his fleet, retreated down river to a dreary

mud bank which seemed to his keen eye to offer possibilities of defence. He was driven out, his little force, more than decimated by disease and casualties, returned again and held grimly on, building huts, then houses, strengthening his pitiable fort till he died in 1693, just in time to avoid the disgrace of being superseded.

The Directors, in spite of Child, still had occasional spasms of pusillanimity and Charnock got no thanks for his pains, but his work remained to vindicate his memory; for the name of the mud bank was Calcutta. His wretched hovels have since grown into the second city of the British Empire, destined for more than 150 years to be the capital of India, until a policy of misguided romanticism transferred the seat of Government to Delhi in 1911.

Long before Charnock's death, however, the {Directors had moved another step forward. They might, they undoubtedly still did, desire to trade and only to trade, but more and more they realised that peaceful trading was impossible in the steadily deteriorating state of India: and, accordingly, in 1688 they passed a formal resolution instructing their representatives in India "to establish such a Politie of civill and military power and create such a large revenue as may bee the foundation of a large well-grounded sure English Dominion in India for all time to come." The reference to a "large Revenue" may be described as one of the last protests of Commerce. Faint and all unheeded, for the day of Conquest had dawned.}



THE TURNING POINT

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THIS HESITANT ADVANCE towards conquest did not imply that, commercially, the East India Company had been a failure. On the contrary : in spite of varying fortunes and changing forms of Government, it could look back on its past career with justifiable pride. The original capital, as we have seen, was £33,133 6s. 8d., eighty years later it was £1,500,000 apart from £700,000 they were prepared to lend to Parliament : through most of the reign of Charles II, the annual profits were nearly 100 per cent : the four original ships had grown to a mighty and well-armed fleet : the factors and agents numbered hundreds where they had numbered tens.

The chief commodities by which this wealth had been built up were pepper, in which Charles I had dabbled so disastrously ; cloves and spices, the chief cause of conflict with the Dutch ; saltpetre, which made most of the gunpowder so lavishly expended in the Civil War ; calico, named after Calicut, imported to such an extent that the weavers of Spitalfields petitioned the Crown on the grounds that their livelihood was in danger ; silks from Bengal, so much in demand in the reaction from Puritan drabness, excellent in texture and cheapness, but poor in

colour, a difficulty brilliantly surmounted by sending out British dyers to deal with them on the spot ; and one commodity which originally (1666) came from China but was eventually to become the most important of all Indian products, tea. Exports were broadcloth, tin, quicksilver, lead, and, far the most important, bullion, £128,000 worth in 1667-68 increasing to £182,983 in 1673-74 ; in all a volume of trade which seems almost to justify even the extravagant eulogies of Sir Thomas Munn in his book, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade*.

"Behold then the true form and worth of forraign trade, which is the great revenue of the King, the honour of the Kingdom : the noble profession of the merchants : the school of our arts : the supply of our wants : the employment of our poor : the improvement of our lands : the nursery of our manners : the walls of the Kingdom : the means of our treasure : the sinews of our wars : the terror of our enemies."

Extravagant language ? Perhaps, but the more one studies the story of the East India Company the more one realises that it is very largely true. Sir Josiah Child at any rate fully believed in its truth, his own language in the "Philopatris" pamphlet is just as extravagant and flowery, and he undoubtedly felt he had every justification for elevating this magnificent Corporation from "a mere trading merchants" (to quote his own words) into a "sovereign estate" in India.

He was now a man of enormous wealth, owning himself a third of the entire capital of the Company, with a fine disregard, when it suited him, of the laws of England, which he stigmatized on one occasion as "a heap of nonsense compiled by a few country gentlemen, who hardly know how to make laws for the good of their families, much less for regulating of companies and foreign commerce" : but, for all his dictatorial ways, he did nothing to mar the Company's excellent reputation as an employer.

The salaries paid were not high, even allowing for the lower standard of those days—for instance, even the accountant-general only received £220 per annum—and, in curious contradistinction to modern practice, pay was lower in India than in England. But the servants of the Company, high and low, were well looked after, with regular if long hours of work,\* holidays and pensions: perhaps almost too well looked after, for they were forbidden to attend “play-houses, dancing schools and taverns,” which must have been singularly irksome to the brighter young sparks of the day.

In India, too, while the merchants, the factors, and writers were allowed considerable latitude in the matter of private trading which, together with free board and lodging, was assumed to compensate for the meagreness of their official salaries (as indeed in most cases it did), their spiritual and bodily welfare was even more strictly supervised. They were treated very much as undergraduates are treated to-day, fined if they were not in by a certain hour, if they failed to attend prayers, if they swore or got drunk, even imprisoned if they struck people “not in the Company’s service” (a rather nice distinction): and if the drink allowance was, to put it mildly, liberal—“half a pint of Arrack or Brandy and one quart of wine at a time”—it was strictly enforced. Indeed one factor, writing home, states that, “at our ordinary meetings every day we took only The”; but that may have been written merely to pacify his anxious mother.

So much for the lower ranks, who might aspire to better things, if they had ability. But only if they had ability. The senior officials were chosen with considerable care, especially after the Company had reached “the conditions of a Sovereign estate in India,” as may be judged from the long letter,

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\* Even Directors had to pay fines for lateness or non-attendance at meetings.

written by the Directors, on the subject of one Nathaniel Higginson, who appears to have been promoted entirely on his merits "for he has no relation here to speak for him, nor even had the ambition to think of such a thing himself" (extraordinary enough in that paradise of nepotism, the England of the Stuarts); and, as a general rule, they well merited their choice as the careers of men like Aungier, Oxendon, Streynsham Master, John Child, Charnock, Quarles Browne of Bantam, Thomas Pitt, and many another amply testify.

The posts to which they aspired, the plums of the service were the heads of departments in each factory: the accountant, the man who in modern parlance signed the cheques: the warehouse-keeper who tabulated all goods bought and sold: the marine purser who looked after invoices, paid the sailors' wages and organised the transport: the secretary who drafted minutes, wrote the reports that went back to the Directors in Leadenhall Street and kept a record of all the transactions of the factory: and, a more recent development, the captain of the garrison.

But, important as these men were, they had each and all of them to take their orders from and defer to the uncrowned king of each factory, the President, those of Surat (till it yielded pride of place to Bombay) and Madras being the chief.

"Uncrowned" is perhaps the wrong word, for, as was only polite in a land that has always had a passion for pomp, these men kept an almost regal state, fitting precursor of the entirely regal state of later Viceroys. The Surat president went about in a palanquin, preceded by "a noise of trumpets," accompanied by a military escort and a native carrying a huge ostrich fan to keep the sun off his august countenance. The Madras president had a personal guard of 300 native soldiers and took his outings with "fifes, drums, trumpets and a flag with two balls in a red field, accompanied with his council and factors on horse-

back, with their ladies in palenkeens": and the description of the meals they ate would make the modern house-wife faint with nostalgic envy.

It was all very impressive, as it was meant to be: and it became more impressive still as the Directors at home gradually became conscious of the advisability, nay the necessity, of a display of military power. Such display began very slowly with the recruitment of Indo-Portuguese half-castes, Topasses as they were called, from the *topis* or hats which they wore, whose military value cannot have been very high: then of natives, who later came to be called Sepoys, the fathers of the magnificent Indian army of to-day, who were better material; and lastly of English troops, mostly men who had left their country for their country's good, adventurers, deserters, criminals, men who almost invariably died of disease or drink, or both, after a short life and, it may be presumed, a gay one, but who, in the century and a half of their history, won more battles against hopeless odds and conquered more territory than almost any army that ever marched: in addition to which there were forts, ships, cannon.

Truly a strange accompaniment to honest trade. Yet it is hard to see what else the Company could have done. The tide of anarchy was rising steadily, the French becoming more aggressive, the Dutch no less hostile, the trader pure and simple had no chance whatever of survival: even at the end of the 17th century, no man, however sanguine, could have begun to prophesy what the presidents and factors and writers, this strange mixed force of topasses and sepoys and rough, tough, often criminal always heroic, English soldiers were to achieve in the century to come.



LORD

CLIVE.

Robert, Lord Clive  
*Engraved from a painting by  
Sir Nathaniel Dance, R.A.*



Shah Alam (the Great Mogul) conveying the grant of the Diwani to  
Lord Clive, August 1765

*From a painting by Benjamin West, P.R.A.*

## TRIUMPH AT HOME AND . . .

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IF ADVANCE TO CONQUEST in India had begun, albeit on a small scale, there were still difficulties to be overcome at home.

They arose from a change in the monarchy. James II had been a good friend to the East India Company. A generous patron, he yet was tactful enough not to have any say in the Company's affairs unless specially asked and then only as a shareholder and not as King of England ; although Bombay and Madras were *to all intents and purposes* Regencies under his protection, flying the Union Jack alongside the Company's flag from their forts.

In fact that much maligned monarch had played no small part in the foundation of the Indian Empire. And now he was gone and a Dutch King reigned in his stead. A Dutch King, a prince of that nation which for nearly a century the Company had been fighting "tooth and nail" in the East ! No wonder the Presidents and Governors looked anxiously out to sea expecting at any moment the arrival of a Dutch fleet ; no wonder the factors and writers trembled in their shoes and probably consumed far more than "half a pint of arrack or brandy and one quart of wine at a time" ; no wonder the Directors viewed with apprehension this "Dutch plot."



Further, Child (for all his earlier flirtations with Cromwell) and the Directors, like their friend and protector, James II, were Tories and the *coup d'état* of 1688 had been engineered by the Whigs. They anticipated trouble not only from the free-traders, but from a general Whig attack on the Company's exclusive privileges ; and they put a bold face on it.

"The interlopers and other maligners," runs a letter sent out from Leadenhall Street to Madras shortly after William's accession, "are very busy and pretend great matters they will do shortly by complaints of the Company's management, a lightness and vanity which they have always abounded in especially upon every change of Government : but these boastings have always come to nought and so they will now ; all Governments being wiser than to be persuaded by such irregular and disorderly vain men."

An excellent example of wishful thinking. The uncomfortable reality was that the "irregular and disorderly vain men" did not only "pretend great matters," they took strong action to bring "great matters" to pass. A virulent propaganda was started against the Company in general and Sir Josiah Child in particular, which was pretty accurately summarized in a pamphlet published in 1690 under the somewhat clumsy title of "Reasons humbly (sic) offered against grafting and splicing : and for dissolving the present East India Company," which it accused of being "founded and planted in a direct opposition to the native liberty of the subject : cultivated, cherished and influenced by the hand of tyranny and arbitrary powers : watered with the tears, groans and estates of the subjects of England : and grown up to an unbounded despotic power."

All this high-sounding rubbish was a screen behind which men, jealous of the Company's privileges, prestige and profits and more than ready to grow up to "an unbounded despotic power" themselves if only they got the chance, sought to break the Company's

strangle-hold on Eastern trade : and the leader of these men was the same Thomas Papillon who had been ousted from the Court of Committees by Child in 1682.

With his friends, all Whigs, he raised £180,000 and (formed a New East India Company, popularly known as the Dowgate Company.) A veritable battle of broadsheets, pamphlets and tracts followed. Dowgate called Leadenhall Street "rascals" and "traitors," Leadenhall Street replied with "pirates" and "thieves." Almost everyone in England took sides : it was even referred to in contemporary plays.

Dowgate had one great advantage : being a new Company they had up to date offended no one and, like some politicians of to-day, were quite ready to promise everyone everything without the capacity or perhaps the intention of fulfilling their promises. Leadenhall Street had an even greater advantage in the leadership of Josiah Child, probably as unscrupulous \* as his enemies made out, but a strong and determined man, considerably cleverer than Papillon.

The battle grew fiercer : Parliament, intervening, suggested the compromise of an amalgamation between the two Companies with a capital of £1,500,000 in which no man should have a share-holding of more than £5,000. Child, instantly realising that this particular clause was aimed particularly at himself, flatly refused. Parliament, anti-company and weary of the whole business, petitioned William III to dissolve the Company and grant a charter to a new Company "in such times as his Majesty's wisdom might see fit."

"His Majesty's wisdom," which was considerable, decided that the old Company could not be dissolved without three years' notice, and again suggested a compromise, an increase of the Company's capital

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\* He has been called the "first stock-jobber" : and certainly some of his dealing in the Company's shares sail dangerously close to the wind.

from £740,000 to £2,000,000 to admit Papillon and his friends. Child, who by this time was confident that he had got the better of "our furious brain-sick adversaries," not only refused the compromise, but deliberately defaulted in payment of a new tax recently imposed on the stock of all great trading companies. It was a bold move, aimed at nothing less than a new Charter and it succeeded, thanks partially to lavish bribery of Ministers and Privy Councillors, carried out by Child's friend, Sir Thomas Cooke, who spent in this fashion more than £80,000 : this being entered in the Company's books as "sundry charges on account of the Charter"—an excellent instance of euphemism.

Actually, the new Charter, granted in 1693, did not differ very much from William III's compromise, but the Dowgate Company were furious. "Monopoly!" they screamed. "Only Parliament can grant a monopoly, the King cannot!" Child did not agree and, by way of proclaiming his disagreement, persuaded the Admiralty to seize an interloping ship, the *Redbridge*, then lying in the Thames preparing for a voyage to India.

But this was overplaying his hand. A wave of indignation swept over the City, and the Commons with a Whig majority resolved that "all subjects of England had an equal right to trade to India and the East unless prohibited by Act of Parliament." A nasty blow at the Company, this resolution was also a nasty blow at the long-enjoyed Royal prerogative of granting charters for exclusive trade. William III was not amused, and very probably (though there is no record of this) said so in his usual direct fashion. The Commons, frightened at their own boldness, did not follow up this victory. The Company was not, as its enemies hoped and expected, dissolved : and, if the clauses against free trading were deleted from the Charter, it was a gesture only, which Child, the Directors at home and the Presidents abroad, completely ignored, as many

an ambitious "interloper" was to discover to his cost.

Child had won the first round on points. But only the first round. Papillon was not beaten and, after a lapse of two years, spent presumably in collecting his evidence, suddenly brought forward wholesale charges of bribery. Very important people, even up to the throne itself, were implicated. Some were cleared, including the King; quite rightly, for, whatever William's faults, he was at least impeccably honest. Others, like the Duke of Leeds, were not. Sir Thomas Cooke, when he refused to answer questions in the Commons, was imprisoned for contempt and further threatened that, if he did not reveal the whole transaction, he would not only be forced to repay the £80,000 to the Company, but would be fined £20,000 into the bargain.

Few people can face with equanimity the prospect of losing £100,000, and Cooke was not one of them. He surrendered, turned, so to speak, King's evidence but, curiously enough, whether from loyalty or fear will never be known, he did not implicate his chief. Everyone else, however, did implicate Child; his house was only saved from destruction at the hands of an angry mob by the intervention of troops; and the affairs of his Company went from bad to worse, both in England and India.

But Child struggled grimly on. He had to a very marked degree the English quality of refusing to admit defeat, he raised more money and went on petitioning for a new Charter. Nor were the Dowgate Company, the New East India Company as they liked to call themselves, the "Cabal of Interlopers," as Child contemptuously termed them, having things all their own way; free trade and piracy hit one Company as hard as it hit the other: though they, too, kept petitioning Parliament to pass an Act to create a New East India Company (to wit, themselves), their efforts in that direction met with no more success than Child's, and everyone in England

of any importance whatever was becoming increasingly aware that to have two companies each claiming an exclusive monopoly of trade in the same country was at best senseless, at worst suicidal.)

It was the moment for the final trial of strength. The French war had ended with the peace of Ryswick (1697), but it had left the Treasury seriously depleted. The Old Company promptly offered to lend the Government £700,000 at 4 per cent. provided their Charter was confirmed and a monopoly of the Indian trade granted. The New Company, equally promptly, countered by offering £2,000,000: and the highest bidder won—or thought it had won for a few rapacious weeks.

The Bill, establishing a new East India Company and giving the Old Company in effect three years' notice to quit, received the Royal assent on July 5th, 1698. On July 14th, the books for the subscription of the £2,000,000 were opened, on July 16th the books were closed. Papillon and his friends were confident this was success beyond their wildest dreams—until they examined the entries more closely, to find that the largest, far the largest, individual subscriber was one John du Bois.

Their faces lengthened, their faces fell as they scrutinised that innocent entry, almost refusing to believe their eyes. It could not be. But it was. John du Bois was simply the treasurer of the Old Company, a nominee of Child's; and Child had outwitted them all at the last. This beautifully simple *coup* made the Old Company the largest individual subscriber in the New: and the former still had three years to run.

Papillon and his Whig friends no doubt consigned Child to perdition, but they were beaten and they knew it. There was only one way out, however bitter it might be: amalgamation.

But the Old Company were not prepared to agree to any arrangement till the New Company "have smarted as much as they have made us for several years past." And they made them smart in good

measure. When the New Company sent an ambassador to Aurungzeb, they promptly sent another : they refused even to consider amalgamation until the New Company were prepared to pay spot cash "for forts, territories, etc., in India, and to lay down the same sum to begin a new joint stock as the London Company (the Old Company) were in a capacity to do." In short, anything that the New Company suggested, the Old Company, Child on his death-bed still advising and leading them, turned down flat.

Papillon threw up his hands in despair, the old fox was undefeatable. The old fox grinned and bade his fellow Directors petition for a renewal of their previous Charter. William III, with his usual common-sense, suggested that an amalgamation of the two Companies "would be most for the interest of the Indian trade." The Old Company agreed, but ventured respectfully to point out that until they knew exactly where they stood, they "could have no security for their estates or debts, either in India or Europe and knew not how to make or receive proposals" ; which was all perfectly reasonable. William, who would have been an excellent Company Director had he not happened to be born a prince, admitted as much and, in April, 1700, gave his assent to a Bill allowing the Old Company to continue its trade, if not its monopoly, in India.

Sir Josiah Child lived just long enough to see it through and, presumably, died happy.

With justification : for actually he had won all along the line. In 1702 both Companies finally entered upon a Tripartite Indenture (Queen Anne, who had just succeeded to the throne, being the third party) : each Company was to supply 12 of 24 "managers" to take control : all business entered into by either Company before the "Charter of Union" was to be concluded by the respective factors within the next seven years : and (at the end of that time (1709) both Companies were to be amalgamated as "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies.")

The Old Company had to all intents and purposes swallowed the New : and, if the heavy meal gave it a certain amount of indigestion (especially in India, as we shall see), amalgamation, when it eventually came (actually in 1708) with the financial position settled by Godolphin's award, proved an excellent sedative.

Having weathered so many storms, the Old Company simply went on under a new name and in a new guise. It had absorbed the personnel of the New Company, the surest way of dealing with rivals : it had got its final Charter not from Monarchy, who might withdraw it for a whim or at the behest of a favourite, but from Parliament, who would hesitate before revoking the Charter, a revocation which would entail not only repaying the enormous sums they had borrowed from both Companies, but also taking over the management of this strange new budding Empire beyond the seas ; in the words of Sir Josiah Child, written in 1694 at the height of the attack by the Dowgate Company, "such blustering storms are so far from tearing us up that it only a little shakes the roots and makes thereby take the better hold and we grow the firmer and flourish the faster."

A true prophecy, for the Company went from strength to strength. It stifled renewed clamour against monopoly by means of an Act of 1712 (passed by a friendly Tory Government) which not only "continued the trade and corporate capacity of the United East India Company" ; but also deleted the most dangerous clause in the Godolphin award, whereby its exclusive privileges should come to an end at three years' notice after the Government had repaid a loan of £3,200,000 : it withstood, in company with the Bank of England alone, the financial panic which ensued on the bursting of the South Sea Bubble in 1720 : it had its Charter renewed by George I in 1726, a fresh attack on its monopoly quashed by Sir Robert Walpole in 1730 : and

finally in 1742, when the storm of the War of the Austrian Succession had already burst upon the world, it secured, by lending a further £1,000,000 to the Government (though at the cost of a drop in its dividends), the extension of its monopoly until 1783.

From the beginning of the 18th century onwards, with unity and a secure position at home, there was nothing to prevent the Company from achieving supremacy in India. At least, nothing in theory.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### . . . TROUBLE ABROAD

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**I**N PRACTICE THERE WAS a good deal, the hostility of Aurungzeb, the Mahratta menace, the behaviour of the Company's servants, the growing power of the French.

While Josiah Child was wrestling with Papillon in England, John Child was getting thoroughly embroiled with the Moghul Emperor in India : and largely, it must be admitted, through his own fault. As we have seen, the Court of Directors had decided on practically open war with Aurungzeb in Bengal, and, indeed, started open war with Charnock's expedition : but they wished to continue peacefully to trade with the same Emperor in Bombay. The whole thing was fantastic : translated into modern terms, it was as if I.C.I., for example, or the Imperial Tobacco Company decided to go to war with the United States, sent an expedition to attack New York and simultaneously maintained business relations with San Francisco. Sir John Child (as he was now) was instructed to avoid war unless it was forced on him "by reason of the Moghul's getting wind" of the Company's curious commercial behaviour in the Hoogli : but, just in case the Moghul did get wind, he took steps to placate the Mahrattas by supplying them with ammunition.

Of course, "the Moghul did get wind" of the

Calcutta affair and probably of the Mahratta ammunition—it is difficult to understand how able and experienced men like the brothers Child could ever have imagined for one moment that he would not. He was extremely annoyed, not without justification : and he was just as good at this pretty game of double-crossing as the English. He ordered his Governor at Surat, Mucktar Khan, to grant the Company an extension of their privileges and, almost before Child had finished congratulating himself thereon, to seize the Company's goods and servants and put a price on Child's head.

This was bad enough, but worse was to follow. Sivaji, the great Mahratta leader, having died in 1680, Aurungzeb was enjoying one of his few periods of success. With the Mahratta pressure temporarily relaxed, he had time to deal with other foes, defeating the independent Kings of Bijapore and Golconda. Then he turned his attention to these insolent foreigners, threatening both Madras and Bombay : yet at the same time, in quite the Company's best manner, receiving English representatives who had been sent to beg from him fresh trading concessions. More curious still, the concessions were granted, provided they "would behave no more in such a shameful manner," and that "Mr. Child, who did the disgrace, be turned out and expelled."

Compliance with the last condition at any rate was forced on the Company by an even stronger hand than Aurungzeb's, the hand of Death. Sir John Child died in Bombay on February 4th, 1690, and the Governorship passed automatically to a Mr. Harris—who was in the Moghul's prison at Surat.

Aurungzeb was further exasperated, again with some justification, by the conduct of the interlopers and the downright pirates, like Avery and Kidd, who plundered Indian ships as cheerfully and as ruthlessly as they plundered those of the French, the Dutch and even their own countrymen. In 1695 Avery captured a vessel carrying Mohammedan pilgrims to Mecca.

This was very nearly sacrilege and Aurungzeb, that devout Mohammedan, to whom one Englishman was the same as another, took it as such. He ordered the native Governor of Surat to seize and imprison Annesley, President of Surat, and all his staff. The Dutch, with their usual helpfulness, promptly promised to clear the seas if they were granted exclusive trading rights throughout India. But Aurungzeb, who was not of a trusting nature, regarded this offer with the gravest suspicion and retorted by commanding that all the European countries should undertake the suppression of piracy : only the English, under Sir John Gayer at Bombay, complied.

This slightly mollified the Emperor, but he insisted that "the embargo on all trade must continue till the innocence or guilt of the English Company should be proved" ; and this innocence, at any rate, was extremely difficult to prove while Avery and Kidd continued their merry career, while Job Charnock built Fort William to strengthen Calcutta, while the new Company tore down the Old Company's flag at Surat and the Indian Governor, interpreting this as yet another insult to the Moghul (though it is not very clear why he should), promptly imprisoned Sir John Gayer, who had arrived from Bombay to settle the quarrel. The Emperor was too harassed and embittered by his own troubles to bother about niceties of evidence : he simply issued orders that all trade with Europeans should cease throughout his dominions.

This was a body blow indeed. The Moghul Empire was still strong, the Company, "sovereign estate" or not, still weak, and the behaviour of its servants did little to strengthen it. Just as the Old Company and the New Company quarrelled and intrigued against each other in England, so did their representatives in India ; the whole position being further aggravated because the New Company men, on the strength of the Charter of 1698, insisted that they were Consuls, direct representatives of the King

and, as such, entitled to precedence over the representatives of a mere commercial syndicate. To which the Old Company retorted that if the argument was valid at all, which they doubted, it would not come into force until the Old Company's three years' notice expired in 1701.

Thrust and counter-thrust continued. The New Company sent out Sir John Norris as Ambassador to the Moghul, the Old Company immediately countered by sending Dr. Davenant, and two rival Ambassadors from the same country to the same country was enough to puzzle any Emperor: he curtly told Norris that he "knew the same way back to England as he came." The New Company appointed Sir Nicholas Waite Governor of Surat (who, incidentally, had been dismissed from the Old Company) with results described above, and bribed the native Governor to keep Gayer in prison. In Bengal, Littleton (New Company) attacked Charnock. In Madras, Thomas Pitt (Old Company), one of the few outstanding men of this futile epoch, told his cousin, John Pitt (New Company), at Masulipatam, that he "could lock up your consul's commission till my masters' time has expired," thus starting an acrimonious quarrel which was only terminated with John's death in 1703; and the lower ranks of both Companies imitated their superiors by arguments, high words and often open brawls and sword-play. It was a puerile and pitiful business, which it is hardly necessary to describe in detail, and which certainly did not redound to the credit of England; and many people besides those directly concerned must have heaved a sigh of relief when it was eventually terminated by Lord Godolphin's settlement in 1708. Meanwhile, a year previously, an event had occurred which confirmed the far-seeing wisdom of Child's prophecy and underlined, as it were, the necessity of a "sovereign estate" in India. Aurungzeb died.

Few Indian rulers have aroused such controversy.

Some historians have called him an upright if narrow-minded fanatic, but his father (whom he deposed) and his brothers (whom he murdered) called him the White Snake, and family nicknames have a knack of being brutally accurate. Some maintain that he was a great ruler, contending in vain with conditions that no mortal man could surmount, others assert that actually he created these conditions by his overweening ambition. Certainly he was a fanatic who tried to exterminate all the Hindus ; and only succeeded in uniting all the Hindus against him. Certainly he was ambitious, striving to bring all India under Moghul rule ; and he ended by splitting that Empire from top to bottom by endless useless wars. He was, in fact, one of the classic instances of a man who tries to do too much and therefore fails to complete anything, and, when he died, India slid faster yet down the perilous slope that leads to anarchy.

It was the East India Company's great chance. Had the Moghul Empire continued to be the solid, cohesive, well-governed realm of the days of Akbar, it is extremely improbable that the "sovereign estate" would have ever amounted to more than a few hard-held seaport towns and coastal strips, but with all India becoming a kind of fissiparous nightmare, anyone bold enough and ambitious enough could hope to carve out a kingdom ; even an Empire. It had happened before in India with the decay of a strong government.

But the English were not the only European nation to whom the chance was offered, and they were not the first to seize that chance. Sir Josiah Child had conceived the right idea, had laid sure foundations : and there it ended. While the representatives of the two Companies fought each other with all the fierce jealousy of rival traders and still, in intervals of sanity, put commerce before conquest, the French were already aiming steadily at nothing short of a great Empire united under the French flag, and supported by French-trained Indian troops and unsapped as yet

and highly effective. But they were not popular : reforms seldom are. Clive returned to England broken in health, poorer in pocket, to face a veritable storm. To enemies among the Directors, old enemies like Sullivan and new enemies like John Johnstone were now added enemies in India, the officers whose allowances he had reduced, the civilians whose profitable and nefarious private trading he had checked : and the whole ugly business was complicated by the fact that the Company was in the throes of intriguing with Ministers and with Parliament for a renewal of the Charter which, it will be remembered, was due to expire in 1783. It was therefore on the floor of the House of Commons that Robert Clive faced his final battle, not to the roar of guns and the heartening tumult of galloping horses, but to the thunder of eloquence, in the hey-day of eloquence, and the enervating clamour of tongues.

At the beginning of 1772, Sullivan in the Commons gave notice of a Bill "for the better regulation of the affairs of the East India Company and of their servants in India, and for the administration of justice in Bengal," and accused Clive, in particular, of creating a monopoly in cotton and diamonds, of speculation, and of having drawn up his salt, tobacco and betel-nut scheme for his own advantage ; in general of almost every crime under the sun : and simultaneously Colonel Burgoyne, who a few years later was to prove such a crass failure in North America, moved that a Select Committee be appointed to consider the state of the East India Company and of British affairs in India generally.

They were, indeed, not in a highly flourishing condition, for a variety of reasons which certainly did not provide a very good background for the new Charter which the Company was determined to have. To that, even his friends in the Court of Directors and Proprietors were prepared to sacrifice Clive if necessary, the more so as, in addition to recommending the strictest economy—a recommendation seldom well

received—he now openly expressed his opinion that India should be administered by the King's Government and not by a commercial company, remarking (in a letter to George III) that “the Court of Proprietors was a bear-garden ever full of noise, intrigue, confusion and anarchy”: and that “its direct influence and action in the Court of Directors was an obstacle to all good management and consistent Government.”

True: if not exactly tactful. But tact was never Clive's outstanding quality, and he was too angry with what he termed the “mean, sneaking, cowardly manner” in which the Directors had behaved to be discreet.

A long series of fierce, bitter debates followed in which Clive, a lion among jackals, defended himself with fervour and, considering that he was a very sick man, with skill and fortitude. He pointed out that in less than two years he had completely freed Bengal of debt: that he was a soldier not a merchant—“Trade was not my profession: my line has been military and political”; that, so far from having milked and mulcted India and the Indian Princes, he was “astonished at his own moderation.” He attributed “the present bad situation to great neglect on the part of the administration: notorious misconduct on the part of the Directors; and the violent and outrageous proceeding of general courts”: and concluded, with that touch of melodrama so dear to the 18th century, “Take my fortune, but save my honour.”

To some extent the House did save his honour. For all the motions accusing him of fraud and peculation were lost, if only after a division; but one clear and unequivocal resolution was carried even without a division: “that Robert, Lord Clive, did render great and meritorious service to the country.”

In other words, he was not exactly condemned, but he was certainly not entirely acquitted. He left the House, broken and bemused, and a few months

later died at the early age of 47, whether by his own hand, whether of the mysterious disease that had so long afflicted him, remains uncertain to this day. The man who, without influence, had founded an Empire ; the soldier who, without training, had won victories which place him high among the Great Captains ; the administrator who, without previous experience of administration, had restored order and prosperity to provinces acquired by accident and ruled by corruption, was sacrificed to the English passion for mediocrity and to the jealousy and petty spite of the men he surpassed and disciplined and despised. His epitaph, inscribed on the walls of the church of Moreton Saye within whose precincts, somewhere, the body of Robert Clive lies secretly buried, rings as proudly to-day in the twilight of Imperial England as in the high noon of her power : "*Primus in Indis.*"



## THE REGULATING BILL

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CLIVE'S POWER HAD GONE, but his policy remained : and already, before his indictment and death, the merciless pressure of events was forcing the adoption of that policy.

In Bengal, the Company's profits, which Clive during his governorship had raised by three-quarters of a million pounds, were steadily dropping again : the country was being drained of bullion to an extent which filled Clive's successor, Verelst, with grave and well-founded apprehension : and a particularly serious famine had reduced the population by a third.

In the South, the Company was involved in a needless and costly war, the expenses of which more than counterbalanced any profits that might still accrue from Bengal. It will be remembered that in his surrender of the Dewani, the Moghul Emperor had handed over to the Company the overlordship of the Carnatic and the Deccan, notably the territory known as the Northern Circars, maritime provinces which had been first occupied by the French, later seized by the English, and later still handed back to the Indian ruler. A generous gesture on the Moghul's part, but he was giving away territory which may have been his *de jure* but certainly was not his *de facto* : and the man in possession, the Nizam of the Deccan,

who considered the Northern Circars part of his domain, objected strongly ; and translated his objections into action. He was already at war with the Mahrattas, but one war more or less meant little to the Indian Prince of those days, and he attacked Madras. Pigot's successor in the governorship, Palk, who was no Pigot and certainly no Clive, got frightened and made peace, binding the Company, not only to pay tribute to the Nizam, but also to send troops to his aid, if and when he needed them.

He very soon did need them. An able and daring adventurer, Haidar Ali, had seized the throne of Mysore, ejecting the hereditary rulers, and was raiding far and wide into the Deccan. The Nizam, having entered into alliance with the Mahrattas to check these depredations, called on the Company to fulfil its obligations : which it meekly, immediately and dutifully did.

But Haidar Ali, an astute politician (Oriental variety) as well as an excellent soldier, was quite capable of dealing with the situation. He bought off the Mahrattas, cajoled the Nizam, and, before the Company knew where it was, it found itself faced with a league of all three, aiming to drive them out of South India altogether.

This ambitious design did not quite succeed, though Haidar Ali's son, Tippoo Sultan, who was to be a nuisance to the Company all his life, almost captured Madras, quite laid waste the outer suburbs and the surrounding country, so that the Madras Council was forced to conclude a further treaty with Haidar Ali (1769) : which was certainly not the kind of treaty Clive or Pigot would have concluded.

Only Bombay had been at peace for many years, quiet and prosperous, if without territorial expansion ; and even that quietude was not destined to be of long duration.

At home, while the Sullivan faction in the Court of Directors wished to keep the power in their own hands, Clive and his supporters did not. The Court

of Proprietors did not : they yearned only for their dividends, and they thought that dividends might be higher under the management of Ministers, who knew nothing of India, than under Directors who did at any rate know something. The general public did not : they were beginning to realise, in the dim, muddle-headed way that the great British Public does begin to realise things, that India was no longer a question of business and dividends, but of administration and justice ; that conquest had definitely, and of necessity, superseded commerce.

Above all, the Ministers of the Crown did not. They were finding it increasingly difficult to cope with or even to tolerate " the existence of such a body as this gigantic corporation (as Macaulay was to call it, sixty years later)—this political monster of two natures—subject in one hemisphere, sovereign in another." They were becoming more and more determined that the Company's financial and territorial gains should at least be shared by the Crown.

Lord Chatham had, in fact, studied Clive's letter, quoted above, to some purpose. It had given him ideas ; and the chief idea was that the territorial revenue, as distinct from the financial revenue, of the Company should be paid to the Crown. Accordingly in April, 1769, a Bill was passed which, while it confirmed to a certain extent the Company's privileges, while it seemed to foreshadow a renewal of the Charter which the Directors so earnestly desired, only did so on terms : the terms being that the Company should pay into the Treasury an annual subsidy of £400,000 and undertake to export annually at least £300,000 of British goods.

It was not a very good bargain for the Company, in view of the fact that their prosperity in India was at the moment and for reasons already stated anything but assured. But they had no option ; they had to acquiesce. " It is better," said the Chairman, Sir George Dudley, " to make no alterations. It is the ultimatum of the Treasury. There, gentlemen,



Colonel Mordaunt's cock match at Lucknow, 1786  
*From a painting by John Zoffany, R.A.*



Consecration of the colours of the Third Regiment of Royal East India  
Volunteers, 28th June 1799  
*From a painting by Henry Matthews*

take it or go into Parliament and God knows the consequences."

Perhaps He did, the Directors certainly did. It was indeed an ultimatum, amounting to, "No subsidy, no Charter," but they were in no position to put up a fight, being at the moment far too occupied in fighting among themselves. And worse was to follow. In June, 1769, after the usual Clive-Sullivan wrangle, the Directors decided to send out Vansittart and two others as Commissioners to discover, if they could, why the high hopes of profits, which the granting of the Dewani had seemed to promise, had never materialised, and to reform the administration which, since Clive's departure, had stepped back into many of its old bad ways : whereupon Chatham stepped in and bluntly informed them that they had no right to make changes in the government of India without consulting him as first Minister of the Crown.

Having thus made his views shatteringly clear, he did not press the point. He did not have to : for a new and important character now appeared on the troubled stage of the Company's interests and intrigues.

George III decided to intervene in India (just as, a few years later, he was to decide with disastrous consequences to intervene in North America) being induced to do so, if much inducement was needed, by the complaints of the Nawab of Arcot.

Mohammed Ali had been an ally and protege of the Company ever since Clive restored his failing fortunes by the memorable diversion of Arcot, but he did not, it would seem, regard the alliance or the protection as unmixed blessings. Pigot had always been subservient in speech and grasping in deed. *Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.* "The Company," he wrote, to the Nawab in 1760, "will never fail to give proof of their friendship and sincerity to you and your family, and will be firm in supporting you and your posterity in the Subahdary of the Carnatic," and promptly gave a "proof," albeit a curious one,

by extorting 500,000 rupees from the recipient of his "friendship." Again, during the French war, he expected the Nawab to pay not only for the siege of Madras "because it was the residence of his friends," but also for the siege of Pondicherry, presumably because it was the residence of his enemies, and, though the Treaty of Paris in 1762 acknowledged Mohammed Ali as an ally of England and as the lawful Nawab of Arcot, acknowledgment was not of much practical value, because Pigot's successors, on their own initiative as well as under instructions from the Directors, went to a great deal of trouble to keep the treaty secret from him.

But Mohammed Ali, like Aurungzeb before him, "got word" of it, decided, reasonably enough, that he had been badly treated and, with true Indian preference for a personality rather than a corporation, took the matter up with King George direct. He sent an agent to London, who did his work so well that George and Chatham came to look on him as a much-wronged man. The picture painted by this enterprising agent was undoubtedly exaggerated, and it is quite probable that Chatham, that very shrewd statesman, recognised it as such, even if George III, who was not nearly so shrewd as he himself believed, did not : but at least it gave them the opportunity and excuse for asserting the Royal prerogative. The Company, hard-pressed by Haidar Ali, asked for naval assistance : which George III was graciously pleased to furnish, but only with the proviso that Sir John Lindsay, in command of the squadron, should be the representative of the King, of the King and not of the Company, in all dealings with the native Princes. The Directors protested even to the extent of suggesting, with all due deference, that "the rights and privileges of the Company rested upon as high authority as the King's Commission to Sir John Lindsay." But they could do no more than protest ; they had to have the ships. Lindsay, whatever he might be called, was in fact an ambassador to the

Court of Arcot, and he carried a letter to the Nawab, signed by the King, countersigned by the Ministers, which assured the latter of the Royal friendship and protection ; informed him that Lindsay had instructions to inquire fully into what had happened since the Treaty of Paris : and expressed the hope that a full comprehension of these affairs would enable him (George III) " to put right past injustice and prevent future oppression."

It was a dangerous, undiplomatic and unconstitutional letter to send to a native prince, even in the hands of the most tactful of emissaries, which Lindsay was not—and Mohammed Ali took full advantage of it, replying, rather subtly, that, gratified as he was by their offer of Royal protection, he yet hesitated to avail himself of it. He pointed out that His Gracious Majesty was very far away, the Company's President uncomfortably close ; he recalled the drastic penalties which had befallen other Nawabs, especially those of Bengal, who had been rash enough to oppose the Company ; and expressed anxiety lest he himself might under similar circumstances lose his throne, adding with perfect truth that the Company had threatened as much only two years previously.

This letter filled the Directors with apprehension when its contents were brought to their notice. They had not the slightest wish to abdicate from the sovereign realm of India, but they certainly could not afford to quarrel with the sovereign ruler of England, least of all at this moment when the Commons were setting up Select Committees, when there was a revival of the public outcry against monopolies, when the prospect of the French wars again rendered naval assistance imperative. So, publicly and for the King's benefit, they soundly berated their servants in India, because they had failed to " provide effectually for the honour and security of their faithful ally, Mohammed Ali," to such an extent that the unfortunate Nawab " found himself reduced, disappointed and almost despised " : they pointed out, more in sorrow



than in anger, that it was all very well to suppress all news of the Treaty of Paris, but, as a result, "we might thereby involve ourselves in the very disagreeable necessity of answering at some future period, for the infraction of a public treaty": and, as for the peace with Haidar Ali, they felt obliged reluctantly to point out that their servants had been guilty "of irresolution as men, disability as negotiators, weakness and deficiency as politicians."

A copy of this impressive document, which (the Directors hoped) would clearly indicate to His Majesty that they were only too anxious to fall in with his wishes in the matter, was sent to the King. But at the same time a further private letter was sent to the Madras Council, admitting that "as to what relates to the Nawab and the conduct which you are to hold in the present parts of India, a great deal must be left to your decision on the spot. You have certainly more knowledge than we of coming at the true knowledge of the causes, the origin and the tendency of disputes."

All this was tantamount to saying: we (the Directors) have had to pretend to abuse you, in order to placate his meddlesome Majesty, what with the business of the Charter and the need for warships: but actually we fully appreciate that you know more about Indian affairs than we do and we want you to carry on as you think fit, always remembering that we and not His Majesty's Government are the rulers of India.

It is possible that George III was impressed by the first letter; it is probable that he or at any rate Chatham had at least a suspicion of the existence and wording of the second. In any case, although the trouble with France had blown over for the time being, a second naval squadron was despatched to India in March, 1771, under Sir Robert Harland, armed with precisely the same powers as Lindsay and with special instructions to "inquire how far the eleventh article of the definitive treaty of peace

times wrong and often silly, but which is as inexorable as, and considerably slower than, "the mills of God." And on this occasion it ground with commendable speed. An English jury found him guilty, and there can be no doubt but that the verdict was correct : Sir Elijah Impey, the first Chief Justice under the new Regulating Bill, and his colleagues unanimously passed sentence : and on August 5th, 1775, Nandar Kumar, the chief of the Brahmins, the leader of the Hindus, was publicly hanged—that being the penalty of forging in those days—while Francis and Company, wild with impotent anger, shut themselves up in their houses and the natives of Bengal looked on in awe-struck amazement.

The case of Nandar Kumar should be widely studied to-day ; for it is the epitome of the story of the English in India. Nandar Kumar is typical of the clever Brahmin, the high caste Hindus, who have through all the centuries intrigued against the government in power, good, bad or indifferent, not as they assert for the benefit of India as a whole, but for the benefit of the Brahmins, the "twice-born sons of God," as they call themselves and genuinely believe themselves to be. Warren Hastings typified the Englishman, the man who believes that in British rule is the only possible salvation of India ; who can out-bluff and out-manceuvre even the Brahmin and who in the last resort does not shrink from using the only means that really impresses the native mind, physical force ; men like Clive before him and Wellesley and Canning and Dufferin and Curzon after him, the men who won and held India. Francis typifies the men who to-day are losing India, the men who listen to the deadly voice of Brahmin propaganda and let themselves be fooled by the subtlest of all intriguers ; the men who to-day are anxious to shower the blessings of Democracy on the most undemocratic collection of disunited nations on earth. Burke, to anticipate a little, typifies the politicians who, then as now, were and are always ready to

burst into floods of eloquence on a subject about which they know less than nothing, and the hanging of the Brahmin ; as ruthless as it was just, clearly indicates the only method of dealing with recalcitrant Indians which the peoples of India understand—and admire. If a modern Warren Hastings had only dealt as faithfully with a modern Nandar Kumar, Mahatma Gandhi, there would be no trouble in India to-day.

Warren Hastings, with his curiously girlish face (if Sir Joshua Reynolds' painting is good portraiture) and his essentially masculine firmness of purpose, had won that round against Indian intrigues and Council treachery, though Nandar Kumar was yet to haunt him, a restless, implacable ghost. The vast majority of the English in India, who hated "King Francis the First," as he was ironically called, approved the deed. So did the vast majority of Indians, who have a curious preference for their governors to govern. But Francis was not beaten yet ; his vindictive hatred of Hastings was aggravated, not appeased ; and controlling, as he still did, the majority in the Council, he continued to thwart the Governor-General and oppose his measures at every turn.

Then, in September, 1776, Monson died and, thanks to his casting vote, Warren Hastings was once more in a position to impose his will on the Council, for all the protests of Francis and Clavering. Which he was proceeding to do when, to the stupefaction of all Calcutta, news arrived from England that the Governor-General had resigned and his resignation had been accepted. Warren Hastings, more surprised than anybody, flatly denied it : \* but Clavering declared himself to be Governor-General. The judges, led by Impey, declared that he was not. Warren

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\* Actually his agent in London, Colonel Maclean, fearing Parliamentary censure as a result of Francis' machinations, but without authority, tendered his chief's resignation : and the Directors, similarly frightened, had accepted it.

Hastings, for once regrettably but quite understandably losing his temper, deprived Clavering of his seat on the Council : and the judges, impartial as ever, declared that he had no right whatever to do any such thing, which would seem finally to dispose of the theory that Impey was a creature of Hastings. Finally Clavering solved the problem by tactfully dying in August, 1777, and, although his successor, Wheeler, was inclined to side with Francis (though with fairness and moderation), Hastings still had the casting vote. Francis, however, remained as hostile as ever, until in 1780 the long-drawn-out feud between the two men culminated in a duel fought in August—which appears to have been Hastings' lucky month. Or perhaps not too lucky. For he did not kill his opponent : but he did at least wound him so severely that he had to return to England leaving the Governor-General at last free to give his undivided attention to ruling India : which was a good thing both for India and for England.

The latter was rapidly approaching a nadir in her fortunes. The great Chatham had died, an incompetent Whig ministry was in power. In America the Declaration of Independence had been followed by Burgoyne's shameful surrender at Saratoga : he apparently found a campaign against American colonists a rather tougher proposition than Select Committees in the House of Commons. In Europe, France, actuated by some muddle-headed enthusiasm for the American rebels, had declared war on England, in which she was joined first by Spain and then by Holland. Gibraltar was besieged and for a time England lost even her supremacy in the Channel.

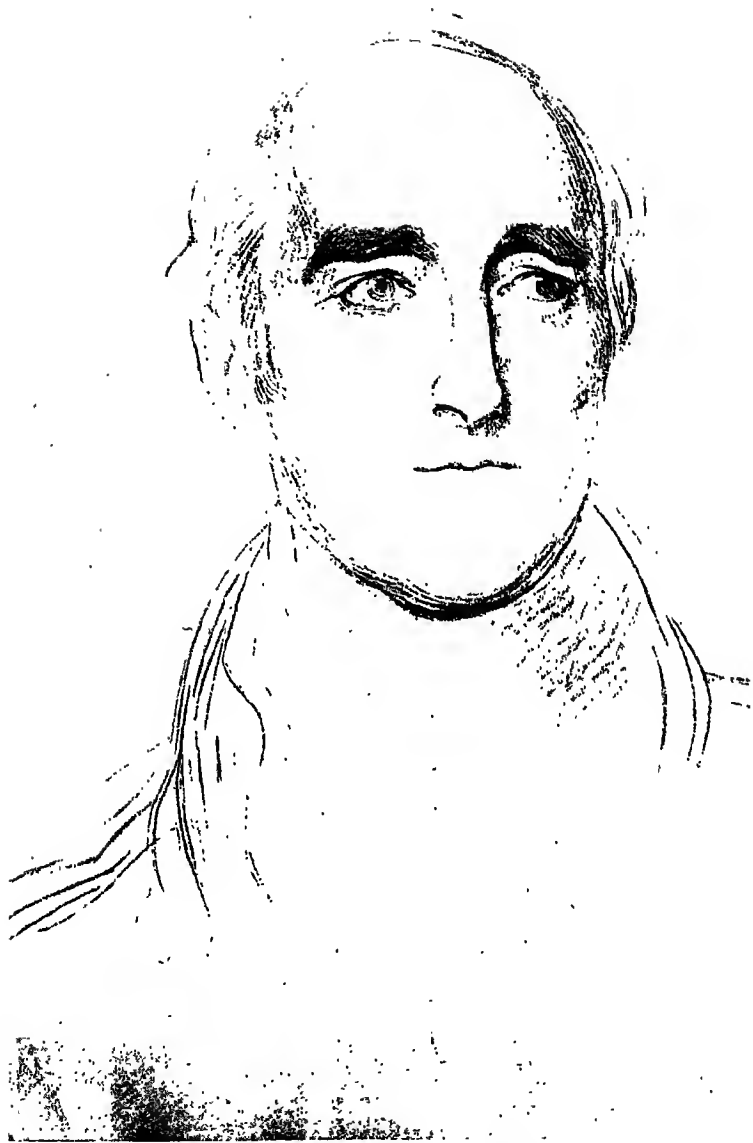
All these disasters had their repercussions in India. In that vast country the enormous preponderance of the coloured population meant that the white man must rule mainly by prestige. If disasters abroad or weakness at home undermine that prestige there is unrest in India. There can be no doubt that in the 1770's, the Indian was perfectly aware that the *yenghi*

*dunnia*, the New World, had broken away, that France was once more a ready ally in any attack on the British : and the more ambitious and restless among the native Princes felt that here at last was a chance of defeating these strange conquering commercialists, who so readily and so successfully exchanged the pen for the sword, who, ostensibly seeking trade, yet contrived to acquire territory. Two rulers in particular fell into this error of wishful thinking, the Mahrattas and Mysore. The Mahrattas, Hindu hill tribes of the Western Ghats, had grown from bands of guerillas into a great warrior confederacy which had conquered all central India from the northern frontier of Mysore to the Ganges, captured Delhi and broken for ever the power of the Moghuls. They had, as we have seen, crossed swords with the English on many occasions since Sivaji attacked Surat a century before. They were already waging a desultory war with the Bombay Presidency which was supporting a Mahratta rebel, Ragoba : and now they received with open arms a French adventurer, the Chevalier de St. Lubin, who arrived in Poona armed with powers to effect an alliance.

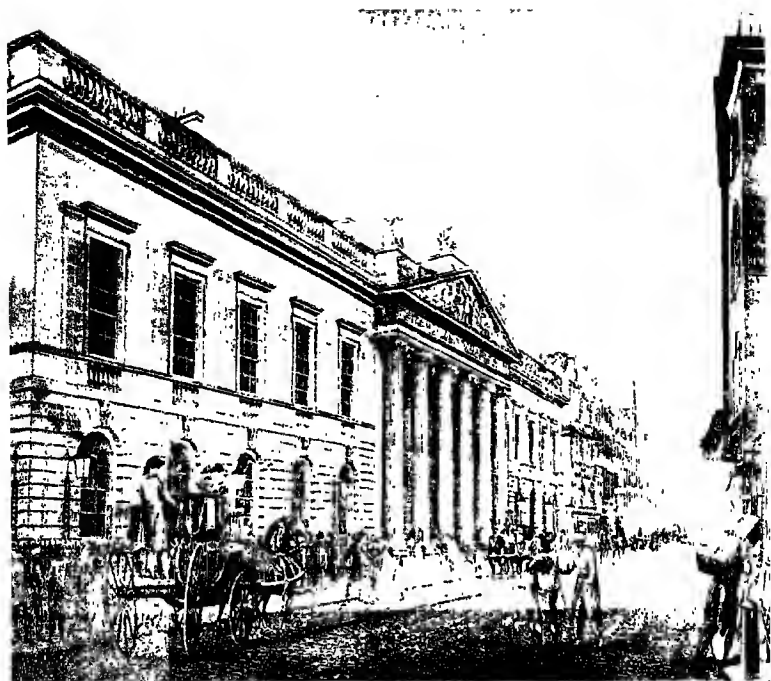
But if England was cursed with incompetent leaders in the West she was blessed with a great leader in the East.

"War," said Warren Hastings, when he heard the news that the Mahrattas had ceded the port of Choul on the Malabar coast to the French, "is now inevitable. Let us be the first to strike a blow."

He struck it by capturing the French settlement of Chandernagore ; by ordering Madras to attack Pondicherry, an order which was duly and successfully carried out by Hector Munro : and by declaring open war with the Mahrattas. The Bombay army under Colonel Egerton was to advance on Poona : and thereabout to link up with the Bengal army, following the unprecedented and, as it then seemed, inconceivably bold plan of marching overland across central India. Unfortunately Egerton proved unequal



The Marquess Wellesley, K.G.  
*by Sir Thomas Lawrence*



*East India House, Leadenhall Street*  
as rebuilt in 1796

to the task. He got within 16 miles of Poona, found himself faced with a superior force and, losing his nerve, concluded peace at Wargaum in January, 1779, agreeing to restore to the Mahrattas all English conquests since 1756 and surrendering the person of Ragoba. In extenuation of the last clause, it must be admitted that the latter, in true Indian fashion, was already intriguing with the Mahratta chiefs, but Wargaum still remains a disgraceful treaty. It was in fact a kind of Indian Saratoga: it encouraged the French: it emboldened several Mahratta chiefs, who were wavering, to join their anti-British countrymen: it stirred up Haidar Ali. In short, it spread optimism among the enemies of England, despondency among her friends—with the exception of the Governor-General, whose courage remained unshaken.

"If it be really true," he had said on receipt of the news of Burgoyne's surrender in America, "that the British aims and influence have suffered so severe a check in the Western world, it is the more incumbent on those who are charged with the interests of Great Britain in the East to exert themselves for the retrieval of the national loss."

He exerted himself; and, if Colonel Egerton was incompetent, General Goddard, in command of the Bengal army, was not. He successfully carried out his amazing march across India, and within two years had captured the cities of Ahmedabad and Bassein, and with his microscopic force totally defeated a Mahratta army, 40,000 strong; while, farther north, another gallant and determined soldier, Captain Popham, had stormed the "castled crag" of Gwalior, the Mahratta fortress that all men considered impregnable; Wargaum was more speedily avenged than Saratoga.

Meanwhile Haider Ali, that shrewd usurper, had not missed his opportunity. Collecting an army, said to have amounted to 90,000 and at least partially led and trained by French officers, a "menacing meteor which blackened all the horizon" (as Burke was later



to describe it), he attacked Madras, and by the end of September, 1780, all the Carnatic, save the walled towns, was in his hands. Again Hastings rose to the occasion. He concluded an alliance with the defeated Mahrattas : he scraped together every rupee and soldier he could find in Bengal and despatched them to Madras under the command of Sir Eyre Coote, who had recently arrived as the military Member of the Council. Coote's temper had not improved in the twenty years that had elapsed since his early victory at Wandersash, but his military skill had not deteriorated. On July 1st, 1781, at Porto Novo, with less than 9,000 men, he utterly defeated Haidar Ali's 90,000, relieved Wandersash for the third time in his life and won a second, if less decisive, battle at Pollilore on August 27th.

The war dragged on. Lord Macartney, Governor of Fort St. George, captured the Dutch settlements of Pulicat, Negapatam and Trincomalee, the beginning of the British domination of Ceylon. Haidar Ali died, but his son, Tippoo, with French help, defeated the English forces under Colonel Braithwaite and captured Cuddalore. A French fleet appeared on the seas under one of the few great sailors France ever produced, de Suffren, and fought a series of pitched battles against the English admiral, Sir Edward Hughes. A see-saw of alternate victories and defeats until, in June, 1783, peace in Europe and the consequent withdrawal of French troops, led at last to peace in India ; an uneasy truce that at least lasted till Hastings' voluntary retirement in 1785.

One may say that he deserved a rest : for, during the past five years, military adventures had been the least of his troubles. Sir Eyre Coote, when he was not safely in the field, was prone to be as trying, if never so despicable, as Francis. Sir Elijah Impey, who had stood by the Governor-General so nobly in the matter of Nandar Kumar, came to conceive an inflated idea of the power and importance of the Courts of Justice and had firmly to be put in his

place. Worst of all, the Directors at home suffered from the curious illusion that the Bengal Presidency could meet all the expenses of the wars against the Mahrattas and Mysore and yet continue to send home just as much money as in times of peace.

They kept shouting for rupees, more rupees and yet more rupees ; and in his anxiety to fall in with their demands, unreasonable though he knew them to be, Warren Hastings was led to commit the most disastrous mistake of his career. To placate the Directors, to save an Empire, he had to have ready cash : and there was only one way of finding immediate ready cash : to squeeze it out of the Indian princes.

In two cases an excuse was to hand. Cheyte Singh, the Rajah of Benares, was suspected, no doubt with justification, of treachery. In Oudh the control of the revenue had been allowed to pass—through the futility of Francis when he had a majority in the Council—into the hands of the Begums, the two princesses, and these two ladies were considerably in arrear with the payment due by treaty for the maintenance of the Company's garrison.

The Governor-General went north in person, "*Hathi pur howdah ghore pur zin*,"\* as the still forgotten Indian doggerel has it : and Governor-Generals should not act as tax-collectors.

So at least thought Cheyte Singh, who threw off the mask and came out in open rebellion : an injudicious gesture which was promptly suppressed by Popham (though only after Warren Hastings had had a very narrow escape) and cost him the enormous fine of £500,000.

The Oudh affair was more complicated. The Begums readily agreed that they were considerably behind-hand with their payment, but blandly pointed out that they had no money. Hastings was in a quandary. He knew they were lying, but he also knew that

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\* With howdahs on the elephants and saddles on the horses.

in India, where the zenana is sacred to any enemy, it would be disastrous to arrest them. Accordingly, he put a guard on their palace at Faizabad and arrested instead two aged ministers who were forced by the threat, and possibly by the actuality, of torture, to reveal the whereabouts of the riches of Oudh, while the besieged Begums, if unmolested, were certainly not over-fed. In other words the ministers were bullied, the princesses were half-starved into submission. The Company netted a cool million sterling. But Warren Hastings had given an opening to his enemies of which they were not slow to avail themselves ; had made an ineradicable blot on the bright record of one of the greatest Viceroyalties in all the history of British India.

## THE GRATITUDE OF ENGLAND

*Second Example*

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WARREN HASTINGS LANDED at Plymouth in June, 1785, to "find myself (as he wrote to a friend) everywhere and universally treated with evidences, apparent even to my own observation, that I possess the good opinion of my country." But not for long : he was soon to find also, as Clive had found before him, that the bitterest battle of his career was to be fought on the floor of the House of Commons : and the House of Commons was not friendly to the Company in general or to Warren Hastings in particular.

For now some years past the struggle between the Ministers and Directors had been increasing in intensity and the Company's position, none too strong in any case, had been weakened by several unfortunate incidents.

There was the regrettable affair of General Stuart, who had proved so incompetent in the last stages of the war against Haidar Ali and the French that, on the conclusion of peace, the Madras Council deprived him of his command. The gallant general blustered that, as an officer in the King's service, he could not be so deprived : whereupon Lord Macartney, the Governor of Madras, without further argument arrested him and shipped him home.

There was the even more regrettable affair of Sir Elijah Impey. The Regulating Bill had set up a Supreme Court as well as a Supreme Council : but it had omitted clearly to define the relations between the two, and the Judges, headed by Impey, developed inflated ideas as to their powers. Matters reached a crisis when they sequestered the property of a wealthy native landowner as the result of a case brought against him by his agent. Hastings retorted by circularising the landowners to the effect that they owed no obedience to the Supreme Court. Impey, furious, summoned the Council to appear before him and, when they refused, declared it to be " a clear contempt of His Majesty's law and of his courts." Hastings played, in reverse as it were, the same card as had out-trumped Nandar Kumar and persuaded, induced, cajoled, or perhaps bullied the agent into dropping his case, thereby cutting the ground from under the judges' feet. Then, in order to achieve a compromise—one may assume that a quarrel with his old friend, Impey, was most distasteful to him—he set up a Court of Appeal (which indeed the Regulating Bill had authorised), with Impey in charge at a salary of £5,000 a year : whereupon Francis, now back in England, broadcast by speeches and pamphlets and whispering campaigns that Impey had been " bribed " with a salary of £8,000 a year, but, quite apart from thus grossly exaggerating the amount in question, clean forgot to mention that Impey then and till the end of his career in India flatly refused to accept one penny of the salary. Not a very successful bribe.

Finally there was the fact, particularly regrettable in the eyes of the Directors, that the wars against the Mahrattas, the French and Haidar Ali had greatly strained their resources, though they had none the less repaid the ~~£1,400,000~~ they had borrowed from the Treasury. On the basis of such incidents—and conveniently forgetting the repayment—the Ministers declared that, as the Company had shown itself unfitted to govern, all their territorial

possessions should pass to the Crown : to which the Company replied, respectfully, but quite unanswerably, that the Crown and its Ministers had themselves not made a very noteworthy success of governing North America. But—and here was the great weakness of the Directors' position—the Company's Charter was due to expire in 1783 and they were forced to petition for its renewal. Rather surprisingly, they got a renewal until 1791 ; but a veritable orgy of accusation was levelled at the Directors, the Proprietors, the Company in general, and in particular the Company's greatest servant. Select Committees to examine the Company's affairs, the actions of the Governor-General, the state of India generally, sprang up like mushrooms in an autumn field : and the spearhead of the attack was Philip Francis, now himself a Member of Parliament, having found time amid all his quarrels with his chief to amass a considerable fortune. A bullet from a duelling pistol is not the best method of propitiation and, if the wound in Francis' body had healed, the wound in his spirit was festering. This might not have mattered in itself, as he was essentially an insignificant person, but he managed to win over one of the most powerful and influential politicians of the day, Burke.

Whether the Irish orator genuinely believed what he was told; or whether he was—he too—imbued with a personal hatred of Warren Hastings ; or whether, politician-wise, he saw a chance for his advancement and took it regardless of the rights and wrongs of the case, has never been made clear, but thenceforward he pursued the Governor-General with a rancour and ingratitude and a disregard for truth which surpassed Francis' best efforts.

Speaking in favour of Fox's India Bill in 1783, he declared that Warren Hastings, although "weighed down by the execrations of the natives (whose "execrations" took the rather curious form of coming in weeping thousands to see him off) and the censure of the Directors (shortly to be revealed in a vote of

thanks for his "great achievements" passed without a dissentient vote), still maintained the worst despotic power India had ever known": far worse than that of the great Moghul whom he described with almost ludicrous inaccuracy as "a personage as high as human veneration could look at, amiable, pious, and accomplished"—a description which would have considerably surprised Shah Alam himself.

The Bill was thrown out by the Lords, Fox resigned office and was succeeded by William Pitt the younger, great-grandson of that President of Madras who had fought so unconsanguineously with his colleague and cousin at Masulipatam. But Francis was never idle, Burke's rancour never slept: and in 1785 the Commons decided to impeach Warren Hastings.

On April 4th, Burke laid on the table of the House nine articles of charge against "Warren Hastings, Esquire, late Governor-General of Bengal," adding twelve more in the week that followed and a final one in May, making 22 charges in all, which were summarised under four heads. Oppression of Cheyte Singh, Rajah of Benares; maltreatment and robbery of the Begums of Oudh (incidentally the only charge which bore any relation to the facts); receiving presents from natives: conniving at unfair contracts and extravagant expenditure.

The sessions of 1786 and 1787 having been occupied in preliminary hearings, on March 13th, 1788, the House of Lords assembled in Westminster Hall to try the impeachment, which was opened by Burke, who, after a brilliant but misleading description of India and an even more brilliant and misleading arraignment of the administration of the accused, concluded with the words:

"Therefore hath it with all confidence been ordered, by the Commons of Great Britain, that I impeach Warren Hastings of high crimes and misdemeanours. I impeach him in the name of the commons house of Parliament, whose trust he has betrayed. I impeach him in the name of the English

nation, whose ancient honour he has sullied. I impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose rights he has trodden under foot and whose country he has turned into a desert. Lastly, in the name of human nature itself, in the name of both sexes, in the name of every age, in the name of every rank, I impeach the common enemy and oppressor of all."

At the end of his speech Mrs. Sheridan, we are told, was carried out in a fit. It is perhaps not surprising: few orators have succeeded in packing more magnificently worded misstatements into a peroration than her husband's friend and ally.

Thus began the duel which is perhaps the outstanding *cause celebre* of British history.\* It produced a spate of eloquence, mostly gorgeously inaccurate, which has seldom been equalled, never surpassed. It inflamed public imagination and attracted public attention to such an extent that fifty guineas was willingly paid for a seat, and, in Macaulay's words, "the long galleries were crowded by an audience such as has rarely excited the fears or the emulation of an orator." It lasted, in all, ten years; by which time public interest had largely evaporated, many of the accusers had quarrelled among themselves, more than sixty of the Peers who had taken part in the opening procession were dead. So that, as Hastings himself remarked bitterly, "the arraignment had taken place before one generation, the judgment was pronounced by another." Until finally, on April 17th, 1795, after a personally-conducted defence, which alone had lasted ten months, Warren Hastings was completely acquitted of every single charge that "envy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness" could bring against him.

No acquittal has ever been more justly earned.

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\* For a superbly written description of the trial the reader is referred to Lord Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings*, though the historical value is diminished by a strong bias in favour of the Whigs and therefore against Warren Hastings.



Even Macaulay, who was prejudiced against him, wrote, "His internal administration, with all its blemishes, gives him a title to be considered one of the most remarkable men in our history"; and Sir A. Lyall, a far more impartial historian, emphasised that he "carried the Government of India through one of the sharpest crises in our national history, when our transmarine possessions were in great peril all over the world, because all the naval powers of Europe were banded against us."

Neither is an exaggeration nor an overstatement. Everywhere else in the world, England was at the lowest ebb of her fortunes. She lost the American Colonies to the rebels, Minorca and Florida to Spain, Senegal, Goree and several West Indian islands to France: she almost lost, and actually did lose for a short time, the mastery of the seas, then as now indispensable to her prosperity, nay to her very existence. Only in India did she weather the storm and emerge with her position not only unshaken but greatly strengthened: and that she owed to Warren Hastings and to Warren Hastings alone. He had brought large tracts of India from anarchy to ordered government. He had built up a wonderful civil service and greatly improved the army. He had driven the final nail into the coffin of French aspirations. He had fought successfully against powerful Indian Princes and treacherous colleagues. "And in his high place he had so borne himself, that all had feared him, that most had loved him, and that hatred itself could deny him no title to glory, except virtue."

Macaulay again: and the sonorous truth of the paragraph is marred only by the last two words, "Except virtue." Yet, studied impartially, where had he failed in virtue? He was abstemious in an age of hard-drinking: a devoted husband in an age of laxity: incorruptible in an age of corruption. His handling of Nandar Kumar, harsh though it may seem to-day, was entirely in accordance with the

laws of England as they then stood : and even in the much-quoted cases of Cheyte Singh and the Begums of Oudh, if the punishment was in Pitt's words "utterly disproportionate and shamefully exorbitant," yet not an anna of those enormous fines had stuck to the Governor-General's fingers. *Pace* Macaulay, the verdict of history must agree with the verdict of the House of Commons and acquit him of all charges brought against him.

But at what a cost to himself ! If, more fortunate than Clive, he had saved his honour, he had lost his fortune. What the malice of Francis, the embittered eloquence of Burke, the polished and perjured periods of Sheridan had so signally failed to achieve, the mere duration of that protracted trial had achieved only too well. Like all men of his time in India, he had amassed considerable wealth, but, unlike most of his contemporaries, he had amassed it honestly. During those grim seven years his wealth wholly melted away. Huge fees had been paid to the lawyers. Huge sums had gone to bribe the press : as early as 1790, Burke declared that £20,000 had been expended for the purpose, and if such an action seems improper to modern eyes it must be remembered that he had to fight his relentless enemies with such weapons as they themselves were certainly using. Large sums in cash had been given to pamphleteers, men like Logan and Simpkins and the unspeakable Anthony Pasquin.\*

On that April day, 150 years ago, Warren Hastings, the man who had saved England in the East, who had built so splendidly on the foundations of Oriental Empire which Clive had laid down, emerged from the scene of his long Calvary without a stain on his character, but without a penny in his pocket ; and, like a wounded animal seeking its familiar den, crawled back to Daylesford, the ancestral house whose glories it had always been his ambition to restore.

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\* Whose name survives in the word, *pasquinade*.

Alas for vain dreams ! Mrs. Hastings' fortune, too, had vanished with her husband's, and only a pension and grant from the Directors of the East India Company, making for once in their history a truly generous gesture, enabled the administrator who had handled millions, the ruler who had set down and put up Princes, to live out the rest of his life in some sort of modest comfort. It is almost as nauseating an example of England's ingratitude as the indictment of Clive : and one wonders, reading the lives of these great founders of the Indian Empire, what magic spell England wields that, with such examples before their eyes, men were still ready to devote their lives to her service, knowing that the greater the success of their efforts, the less would be their reward.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### CHANGE OF STATUS

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LORD CORNWALLIS at least wondered. "Why," he asked drily, when offered the Governor-Generalship, "should I run the risk of being disgraced to all eternity to fight Nabob princes, my own Council and the Government at home?"

But the spell was too strong for him. In 1786, in spite of doubts and hesitations, he accepted the post and went out to India. But it was a different India, or, rather, an India standing in a different relationship to the Home Government. The long campaign, which culminated in the trial of Warren Hastings, had definitely weakened the Company's position. Fox's Bill, a bad Bill, had been thrown out by the Lords, who in those days could still veto the more egregious futilities perpetrated by the House of Commons; Pitt's India Bill, a good Bill, was not. In 1784 it received the Royal consent, given, one fancies, with satisfied alacrity. For it definitely brought the Crown into the picture.

It set up a Board of Control composed of Privy Councillors nominated by the Crown, whose President held, to all intents and purposes, the same position as the Secretary of State for India of later days, and whose members had no power of patronage

whatever. Patronage still remained with the Company with two important exceptions. The King appointed the Commander-in-Chief, who was always to be second only to the Governor-General. The appointment of Governor-General, the Governors of Bombay and Madras and the members of all three Councils, while made by the Court of Directors, were made subject to the Royal approval; and, should a vacancy occur in any of these posts, the Company must fill it within two months or the right of nomination would pass to the King.

Apart from this question of patronage the Board of Control were to exercise in matters political, military and fiscal a "superintendence and control over all the British territorial possessions in India and over the affairs of the Company in England," while the Court of Directors was concerned exclusively with matters commercial; and, though theoretically still to be composed of 24 members, was actually reduced to three, forming a Secret Committee empowered to transmit orders to India without consulting their colleagues—which after all only legalised what Josiah Child and Laurence Sullivan had constantly done. But neither the Secret Committee nor the Court of Directors as a whole could send any orders to India referring to civil and military affairs without first obtaining the sanction of the Board of Control. Further, in the event of the Directors failing to send to the Board copies of their despatches, the latter were empowered to send orders on their own; though, should such orders refer to commercial matters as against civil or military matters, the Directors had the right to appeal to the King in Council; which sounded very grand, but in actual fact was not likely to do them the slightest good.

Further clauses laid down that every man who held high office in India should on his return, disclose the amount of his fortune, and set up special courts "for the prosecuting and bringing to speedy and condign punishment British subjects guilty of

extortion and other misdemeanours while holding offices in the service of the King or Company in India." But, as no one ever dreamt of making such disclosures and as no one was ever arraigned before this Court, these two clauses were a dead letter from the very beginning and were repealed in the amended Bill which was passed two years later.

In India the Governor-General, and the Governors of Madras and Bombay under him, were given greatly increased powers : including the right of acting in an emergency without consulting even his Council of three members (of whom one was the Commander-in-Chief) ; which effectively nipped in the bud the rise of any future Francis.

To sum up briefly : the handling of all civil and military affairs in India passed to the Board of Control who were responsible only to Parliament, although in practice these powers were not so extensive as they seemed, for the Board who knew nothing of India were, by the laws of common-sense which sometimes influences even politicians, bound to consult the Directors who did. The handling of purely commercial matters remained with the Directors, who were responsible to the Board of Control and, for all practical purposes, to the Board of Control alone ; for the Court of Proprietors, that noisy, grasping "bear-garden" which Clive had condemned, found their opportunities for interference strictly curtailed. And the handling of everything in India passed in effect to the Governor-General, who was theoretically responsible to all sorts of people, practically only to himself—in view of the fact that correspondence between England and the East took at least a year ; that his own Council could advise and criticise but never veto ; and that the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay were strictly forbidden to make wars or treaties, or even enter into negotiations with native Princes without orders from Calcutta.

The "Sovereign Estate" in India had been

achieved, but the sovereignty had passed in a large measure from the Company to the Governor-General who, wrap it up as they might, was really a nominee of the Crown. Warren Hastings was the last of the conquering commercialists, Cornwallis was the first of the great Proconsuls.



The action off Pulo Aor, 15th February 1804, between a fleet of merchant vessels under Commodore (afterwards Sir Nathaniel) Dance and a squadron of French men-of-war under Admiral Linois

*From a painting by T. Butterworth*





The fight between the *Warren Hastings* and *La Piemontaise*, 21st June 1806. The fight, lasting four and a half hours, ended in the surrender of the East Indiaman to the French frigate. She was afterwards retaken by some British cruisers

*From an engraving by Joseph Jeakes*

THE FIRST PROCONSUL

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INDIA HAD IN FACT ceased to be merely a kind of exotic fairy-land with which one traded. It had become part of a fast-growing Empire, a dependency which, for the next half-century, was constantly to be enlarged. The Presidents, primarily commercial, became Governors primarily Imperial; the writers and factors became Civil Servants; the army was reinforced and stiffened by regular British troops: and the inevitable transition stage, when the old order still clung feebly to the reins and the new order was not yet firmly in the saddle, was most skilfully handled by Lord Cornwallis, who had decided to "run the risk of being disgraced for all eternity"—and decided wisely.

All these changes were definitely beneficial.

It was obviously impossible for a Governor adequately to carry out his function of governing if any Member of his Council could play Francis to his Hastings; if the lesser Presidencies of Bombay and Madras could make peace or war at their own sweet will.

It was obviously impossible to obtain anything like a just administration when the young factor or writer was allowed, nay encouraged, to trade on his own. When in order so to trade, in order to keep up

the lavish style of his colleagues, he was forced, unless he was singularly strong-minded—and the Indian climate does not exactly encourage strong-mindedness in the very young—to have recourse to the *bannia*, the native money-lender, the class which through all the centuries has been the curse of India. Clive, who had been through the mill himself, knew exactly what happened, and has left a vivid picture of the youthful writer—as it might be Robert Clive—arriving in India with some £5 per annum to spend.

“As soon as he lands,” he wrote, “a *banian* (spelling was never Clive’s strongest suit), worth perhaps £100,000, desires he may have the honour of serving the young gentleman at 4s. 6d. per month. The young man takes a walk about the town: he observes that other writers, arrived only a year before him, live in splendid apartments, ride upon fine prancing Arabian horses: that they keep seraglios, make entertainments, and treat with champagne and claret. When he returns he tells the *banian* what he has observed. The *banian* assures him he may soon arrive at the same good fortune: he furnishes him with money: he is then at his mercy. The advantages of the *banian* advance with the rank of his master who, in acquiring one fortune, generally spends three. But this is not the worst of it: he is in a state of dependance under the *banian*, who commits such acts of violence and oppression as his interest prompts him to under the pretended sanction and authority of the Company’s servant.”

Not quite the best method of ruling a country whose inhabitants, high and low alike, while not noticeably proficient in administering justice to others, are very particular as to how others administer justice to them.

Clive, as we have seen, began the process of reforming such abuses, of attracting a type of young man “more moderate or less eager in their pursuit of wealth.” Lord Cornwallis completed it. The last of the “get-rich-quick wallahs” were weeded

out: salaries and pensions adequate to the hard and responsible work were introduced until the Indian Civil Service came, and rightly came, to be one of the highest-paid professions on earth, and for 150 years ambitious parents urged their promising offspring to take up "a career worth £1,000 a year alive or dead."

It was obviously necessary that the army should be reinforced now that a war with revolutionary France was daily becoming more certain; and, accordingly, a Bill was passed enabling 8,000 troops to be sent to India in addition to the 12,000 already in the Company's service over and above the Sepoys—the beginning of the system by which a British regiment is always brigaded with Indian troops.

Actually this war did not break out till 1793 and the Mahrattas were quiet for the time being. But there was one enemy in India who was not quiet. Tippoo Sultan of Mysore attacked the Rajah of Travancore, almost completely over-running the country. Cornwallis, who combined the role of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, showed himself as jealous of English prestige as Clive or Warren Hastings. The first English counter-attack having met with only varying success, he sailed for Madras, taking the Bengal Army with him, led his force in person and, after capturing Bangalore, pressed on to Seringapatam, which eventually surrendered in February, 1792; Tippoo's two sons being handed over as hostages.

"No termination of the war," Cornwallis wrote to his brother, "could have been attended with more solid advantages to our interest: and the deference which was paid us on the occasion, both by friends and enemies, has placed the British name and consequence in a light never before known in India."

Which was true enough: for, though the agents of revolutionary France became increasingly active, it was some time before they could induce "*Citoyen* Tippoo" (as they called him) to renew hostilities.

~~But Cornwallis' chief claim to a place in the gallery of great Governor-Generals was neither administrative nor military. It was financial, the Permanent Settlement of the Land Revenue of Bengal, which up to that time had been collected under the old Moghul system of *zemindars* or tax farmers, with no fixed assessments and a wide variation in the amounts collected annually. Cornwallis ordered a definite assessment based on the average amounts collected in the past, the total of which eventually amounted to nearly 3 millions sterling, and his successor, Sir John Shore, afterwards Lord Teignmouth, a lesser Governor but a greater mathematician, improved and enlarged the system.~~

All these administrative, military and financial measures may be said to have been taken by the Company rather against their commercial will : for, whatever the Board of Control might do, the Directors still clung desperately, and rather pathetically, to the idea that they were primarily a commercial concern. "Trade," they cried in effect, "we must have more trade" : and, as India was apparently too bellicose to be a very suitable trading *milieu*, they turned their attention to China, which, after years of effort, was not proving so profitable as they had expected. Lord Macartney was sent out as a kind of trade ambassador and "was received with the utmost politeness, treated with the utmost hospitality, watched with the utmost vigilance and dismissed with the utmost civility." In other words the mission was a complete failure, which Macartney himself attributed, no doubt to some extent correctly, to his ignorance of the language and a letter from the Emperor of China to King George concluding with the words "as the requests made by your ambassadors militate against the laws and usages of this, our Empire, and are at the same time wholly useless to the end proposed, I cannot acquiesce in them," set at rest any doubts there may have been as to the completeness of the failure.

But, though the mission to China was a fiasco—though conquest was definitely superseding commerce in India, the Directors in England were still merchants, still enamoured of the commercial side, half-frightened of the imperial side of the queer hybrid which the Company had now become, still anxious for the extension of their monopolistic charter: and in 1793 the Charter came for renewal as laid down in the Regulating Bill.

On this occasion, possibly because the Ministers now felt that they had all the control they wanted, there was little trouble. Mr. Secretary Dundas himself piloted the Bill through the House, pointing out, *inter alia*, that the Company employed 81,000 tons of shipping and imported annually £700,000 of raw material: and the Charter was renewed for a further 20 years. Private trade, that old bugbear, was limited to 3,000 tons per annum, but the Company had to pay over £500,000 to the Government, and the Crown was granted the right to appoint to the Board of Control men who were not Privy Councillors.

The Charter seemed cheap at the price, and the Company obviously thought it so, for they contributed nobly to the expenses of what they rightly called "the present just and necessary wars against the French regicides": but in actual fact it was in the nature of a formality. They had got their Charter, but they had ceased to be a commercial company, they had become, whether they liked it or not, a kind of Empire-building weapon in the hands of the Crown.

A curious and typically English improvisation, which, as is the habit of English improvisations, worked magnificently and quite illogically. On the face of it an arrangement by which commerce and conquest were inextricably mixed, by which sovereignty was distributed between the Company and the Crown, between a Board of Control in England and a Governor-General in India, would seem bound to create friction and inefficiency. It did not do so

for two reasons. The first was that, whatever the theory, in practice all power passed into the hands of the Governor-Generals, from Lord Cornwallis onwards, were statesmen rather than business-men and, almost without exception, very great statesmen, a non-hereditary dynasty which for energy and efficiency compares very favourably with any dynasty in history : and, though Pitt's India Bill had declared that "to pursue schemes of conquest or extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and the policy of the nation," in actual fact the remorseless pressure of events, European as well as Oriental, made "conquest and extension of dominion" imperative not only for the safety of England but for the prosperity of India herself.

The Company had been forced to conquer on a small scale for the maintenance of trade ; the Governor-Generals were forced to conquer on a grand scale for the preservation of Empire. Cornwallis was compelled to defeat Tippoo Sahib by the latter's attack on Travancore, an ally of England. Lord Teignmouth was forced to dethrone the Nawab of Oudh because the latter's complete lack of knowledge of even the elementary principles of good government was undermining good government throughout Hindustan : and then the storm burst that was to rock Europe to its foundations and have repercussions all over the East. The democratic storm, which paradoxically increased the autocratic power of the Governors, the storm which was to bring down kingdoms and empires like leaves in the high winds of autumn, yet, paradoxically again, only to strengthen the Empire of England ; the dreadful, devil-inspired tornado known as the French Revolution. Fortunate indeed for England, fortunate for India that the moment, as so often in English history, produced the man who stands high, perhaps highest, in that great dynasty of Pro-Consuls.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### *PAR NOBILE FRATRUM*

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**R**ICHARD COLLEY WELLESLEY, Baron Mornington, was typical of these new Governor-Generals ; of the Proconsuls whose story from 1786 to 1858 is the story of the East India Company. Like Cornwallis before him, and many another after him, he was the member of a powerful and distinguished family, an aristocrat of the aristocrats with all the virtues and all the defects of his class, and, with due deference to ideas so popular to-day, the former far outweighed the latter.

They might be autocratic, but they were just. They might be arrogant, but they were entirely unbiassed. They were paid enormous salaries, £20,000 a year, but they earned every penny of it by an administration which may have been unimaginative, but was certainly enlightened. Above all, they were too sure of themselves, socially and financially, to let any question of pocket or prestige deflect them from their standards of good government.

In a word, they were Statesmen not Company Directors, and Statesmen in the very best sense of the word, who entered political life, not for what they could make out of it in the modern fashion, but for what they could put into it ; in short, because they conceived it to be their duty. They typified the



altered character of the Company and, commercially, the Company suffered ; the days of high dividends were gone for ever. But imperially England gained. Lord Mornington—he became Marquis Wellesley in 1797, two years after taking up the Governor-Generalship—possessed, in addition to the qualities enumerated above, unusual firmness and far sightedness : and further, an asset which only Sir Josiah Child had possessed before him and none were to possess after him in the long history of the Company, a brother in India who was as great, or greater, than himself—Arthur Wellesley, later to be known better as the Duke of Wellington.

They were a formidable partnership in a formidable age. Change of status was not confined to the Company. The old world of emperors and kings and aristocratic governments was tottering. The first “Government of the people, for the people, by the people” had already emerged in France, was already making an unholy muddle, was already following the inevitable course of such governments and giving place to a dictatorship. The first great exponent of modern power-politics had already, in Italy, taken the first steps in the career that was to sweep like a tidal wave across Europe.

With the usual results. It is a curious fact that revolutionary governments, while destroying or altering so much of the old regime, tend to carry on that regime’s foreign policy ; and, just as the Russians of to-day are aiming at the same aggressive Imperialist expansion as the Tsars they liquidated, so did the French at the end of the 18th century : the French revolutionaries were, in imperial policy at any rate, *plus royalist que le roi*. From 1793 onwards their agents were continually travelling overland to India to intrigue with “*Citoyen* Tippoo” or any other Prince who would listen to them, and by 1798 these unwelcome swallows, harbingers of a revolutionary summer, had increased to such an extent that the Company appointed one, Harford Jones, to be “Resident at

the Court of the Pasha of Bagdad" for the express purpose of keeping an eye on their activities : while Napoleon never made any secret of his intention to conquer India, set out in fact to do so, only to be checked by Nelson at the Battle of the Nile on August 1st, 1798, which saved India from invasion and a junction of the forces of Napoleon and Tippoo which might well have made the future story of India French not English.

There was an obvious antidote to all these poisonous plans, the elimination of Tippoo. But even that was not so straightforward as it sounded. The Mahrattas, if not openly hostile, were certainly not noticeably friendly ; the Nizam of the Deccan had a large, comparatively well-disciplined army, which might not be of much use as a friend but would be very dangerous as a foe. Lord Wellesley, a great believer in the Hitlerian policy of attacking one enemy at a time, patched up an uneasy peace with the Mahrattas, persuaded the Nizam into an alliance, even tried to wean Tippoo from the French : in vain. But, having for the moment reduced his enemies to one, he struck and struck hard. The Company's army, by now of an impressive size, was placed under the command of General Harris ; the Nizam's contingent, equally large and stiffened by the 33rd Foot, were entrusted to the Colonel of the latter regiment, Arthur Wellesley, then 30 years of age : and the combined forces entered Mysore in March, 1799, making a picture which greatly impressed the future victor of Waterloo.

"The march of these two armies," he wrote in his despatch, "was almost in the form of a square or oblong, of which the front and rear were composed of cavalry, and about two or three miles in extent : the right and the left (owing to the immense space taken up in the column by field-pieces drawn by bullocks) \* about six or seven miles. You may have some idea of the thing when I tell you that, when

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\* He estimated the number of bullocks to be 60,000.

all were together, there was a multitude in motion which covered 18 square miles."

Rather more : for they were shortly joined by the army of Bombay and, thus reinforced, pushed on to Seringapatam, which Tippoo confidently believed to be impregnable. He was wrong. The defences were carried by a storming party of 2,500 Europeans and 2,000 Indians under the command of General David Baird, who had himself been a prisoner in Tippoo's hands for three years,\* which no doubt accounted for the ferocious and vindictive courage he displayed.

The victory of Seringapatam was remarkable in many ways. It involved the largest armies that had yet taken part in Indian warfare. It removed a most dangerous enemy, Tippoo himself being killed in the battle, and the rightful owners being restored under British protection. It dealt a serious blow directly to French aspirations in India, indirectly to her power in Europe : and it proved conclusively, if further proof were needed, that British troops in India were invincible whatever the odds against them.

Colonel Wellesley was made governor of the city, actually by General Harris, though Lord Wellesley would, on his own admission, have made the appointment in any case : which is considered by some historians, who maintain that the honour should have gone to the leader of the storming party, to be a gross example of nepotism. It is difficult to see exactly why : Baird was a man of magnificent courage, a cut-and-thrust soldier of the first water, but he was no administrator. Indeed, his successful rival, a shrewd judge of character, while admitting him to be "a gallant, hard-headed, lion-hearted officer," described him as one who "had no talent, no tact, had strong prejudices against the natives, was

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\* As a prisoner he had been chained to another man. "I am sorry," his mother remarked when she heard the news, "for the man who is chained to our Davie."

peculiarly disqualified from his manner, habits and temper for the management of them." Arthur Wellesley had talent and tact in plenty, he had also that peculiar ruthlessness which was later to win him the title of the Iron Duke. He flogged and hanged the victorious army, now thoroughly out of hand, back to discipline. He treated the conquered natives with humanity and consideration, and he founded the modern kingdom of Mysore, which remains to this day one of the most enlightened and best-governed of native states.

He showed in fact qualities, both military and administrative, which his elder brother had already suspected and which, now that they were proved, he was not slow to use. Napoleon's sea expedition against India had been shattered at the Nile, his even more ambitious plan for an overland invasion \* had been checked by the successful defence of Acre, the might of Mysore had crumbled and ceased to be. It was now the turn of the Mahrattās and, in the opinion of his elder brother, Arthur Wellesley was the man to teach them their much-needed lesson.

These Hindu tribes of the Western Ghats had now become a confederacy which was the greatest native power, conquerors of Delhi, masters of all central India. With troops armed with French weapons, disciplined and stiffened by able French officers such as Perron and Bourquien, five great Mahratta chiefs, the Gaekwar of Baroda, the Peishwa Biji Rao, Holkar of Indore, Scindia of Gwalior and Bhonsla of Nagpur, might have made things difficult, if not impossible, for Wellesley—had they been united. But Indians, as certain politicians have discovered since, even if they unite for a time, can never remain united long. Instead they quarrelled, as usual, over the headship of the Confederacy ; Holkar of Indore attacked the

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\* A curious forestalling of Hitler's great pincer movement which was to have effected a junction with the Japanese. Perhaps the Fuehrer copied it.

Peishwa and drove him out of his capital of Poona. Arthur Wellesley marched 600 miles from Seringapatam and replaced him. Scindia came to Holkar's aid against the English, and Bhonsla of Nagpur, after an uneasy attempt to sit on the fence, joined them. The Peishwa looked outside the Confederacy for allies, found them in the Nizam of Hyderabad and Lord Wellesley, who realised with his usual cold clarity of vision, that there could be no peace in India while the Mahratta power remained unbroken.

"Extension of dominion" might be "repugnant" to unthinking people at home, it was vital to the survival of the English Empire in India and he was a man who faced facts: and, facing them, took strong measures unhandicapped by muddle-headed idealism. He divided all his available forces into two. In the country of the Peishwa (now the Bombay Presidency) and Hyderabad, Arthur Wellesley, now a general, was placed in command of the army and in charge of the political affairs of the whole district. In Hindustan proper, Lord Lake, the Commander-in-Chief, held similar powers. On August 3rd, 1803, the British Resident, who had been trying to find a peaceful solution, left Scindia's camp and, underlining his departure in his brusque way, Arthur Wellesley wrote to the Mahratta chief, "I offered you peace in terms of equality and honourable to all parties: you have chosen war and are responsible for all consequences."

The consequences were disastrous to the Mahratta Confederacy, for seldom have two generals so unlike as Lord Lake and General Wellesley simultaneously conducted campaigns of such striking brilliance. Arthur Wellesley, whose genius was of the kind that results from an infinite capacity for taking pains (in contradistinction to Clive who relied on flashes of inspiration) which always, against all the laws of probability, came off, had made his usual meticulous preparations, tens of thousands of bullocks for transport, boats for crossing the unfordable Goda-

vari river, a time-table meticulously worked out with Lake and the commanders of the subsidiary armies of Bombay and Madras : and immediately on the dispatch of his letters to Scindia he moved with thunderbolt rapidity, in spite of roads sodden by the Rains, capturing Ahmednagar north-east of Poona on August 12th. On August 21st he crossed the Godavari, while Colonel Stevenson in charge of another army, consisting largely of the Nizam's troops, was drawing towards him from the East. On September 21st both forces were near Aurungabad, relentlessly pressing on the heels of Scindia's retreating army. A joint plan was concocted for attacking him on the banks of the Kaitna but—the one hitch in this cavalcade of success—Stevenson was misled by his guides and failed to appear.

Wellesley found himself confronted by an army ten times greater than his own, well-disciplined and well supplied with French artillery. But heavy odds never deterred the English in India. He attacked and, by what he modestly termed "a very ordinary exercise of common sense," won a complete and crushing victory at Assaye in a battle which he described long after as "the bloodiest for the number that I ever saw."

The Mahrattas fled, but the pursuit never relaxed till, by the middle of October, Scindia sued for a truce. It was granted. Whereupon, with characteristic treachery, the Mahratta passed his cavalry on to his ally, Bhonsla, who was still in the field. Wellesley, who disapproved of treachery, instantly struck again and, while Stevenson stormed Asseerghur and Burhanpur, defeated the two chiefs on November 29th, rounding off a brilliant campaign with the capture of Gawilgarh on December 15th.

Meanwhile Lord Lake had been equally successful, equally rapid. On September 4th he stormed Aligarh ; on the 12th defeated a combined Mahratta-French army and entered Delhi the following day, extricating the blinded Moghul Emperor from the

dungeon into which the Mahrattas had thrown him, and thus propitiating the Moslem population of North India. Scindia, who had now joined his northern armies, retreated, defeated but still defiant: was beaten again at Muttra and yet again at Agra. But, to quote the once popular, now long forgotten, "Song of the Subadhar."

"Agra, Delhi, Aligarh and Coel's deads were vain  
Without the crowning victory upon Laswari's plain.  
The flower of Scindia's chivalry, the Invincible  
Brigade,  
To make one furious struggle yet, were for the strife  
arrayed."

The verse is execrable; the sentiments and the truth therein impeccable. Laswari was the knock-out blow, Scindia surrendered, ceding enormous tracts of his territory to the conquerors, and this, one of the finest combined campaigns in history, came to an end. In five short months the Governor-General—for much of the planning of the broad strategy of the campaign was due to him—and his brilliant subordinates had crushed their greatest rivals, and reduced the proud chiefs who aspired to the sceptre of the Moghuls to the status of subservient princelings: only Holkar remaining independent.

The Directors should have been very pleased about it. They were nothing of the kind. They still wanted dividends, not dominions. They were appalled at the cost of Lord Wellesley's wars. They distrusted Lord Wellesley's policy of the Subsidiary System, which consisted of making treaties with native princes from the Moghul downwards, under the terms whereof a military force, commanded by British officers, and a British Resident, responsible for the control of all state affairs save those purely domestic, should be maintained in each state at the Prince's expense: which, in short, left to the Princes regal pomp without regal power. They considered—and the sentimentalists in England agreed with them

—that this system was unjust and tyrannical, when actually it was, in Lord Brougham's words; "the fabric of useful and humane and enlightened policy which we erected on the ruins of their own (the Princes) barbarous system, and particularly the cruel despotism under which the native millions had formerly groaned." They were even blind to work which they should have been the first to admire in Lord Wellesley's administration; the extension of the commerce and commercial intercourse of India; the financial reforms, which in the course of a few years were to double the Company's revenues: the encouragement of ship-building and the use of cheap Indian-built ships.

So, far from admiring, they accused the Governor-General of "simple despotism" and of "the intention to concentrate all the political powers of British India in the person of the Governor-General." Which, as we have seen, was exactly what was happening, though by pressure of circumstances rather than by any deliberate policy of the Proconsuls. But neither the Directors nor, with some honourable exceptions like Pitt, the Members of Parliament could see that. They were always thinking in terms of a bygone age. Sir John Malcolm puts it admirably in his *Political History of India*, "The British Legislative had but slowly followed the progress of the power of the Company in India. It had legislated for factories when the Company was in possession of provinces: and, by the time the laws were completed to govern provinces, the Company had acquired kingdoms."

Lord Wellesley, conscious of the rightness of his policy, impatient of pin-pricks and lack of support, resigned in July, 1805 and, leaving Lord Lake to deal with Hölkar, returned home—to experience again the gratitude of England as Clive and Warren Hastings had experienced it before him. There were the usual accusations and recriminations in Parliament; the usual jackal was found to snap at the lion's heels, one James Paull whose complacent



inefficiency had failed to win him advancement in India.

But things had changed very considerably. It had been comparatively easy to attack self-made men like Clive and Hastings ; it was a very different matter to attack a member of one of the great families. The attempt was a fiasco, the very fact that it had been made was soon forgotten. Even the Directors came to a different frame of mind and voted to the man they had criticised and abused a pension and an elegant statue "as a permanent mark of their admiration." They may have done it in secret thanksgiving to Providence for having relieved them of "a high-handed and expensive governor," but they did it : and Lord Cornwallis, who had been so dubious in 1786, was now twenty years later apparently so confident in the comparative immunity of Governor-Generals that he consented to take on a second term of office.

If he indeed possessed such confidence, he was given, as it happened, little opportunity of testing it, for he died within two months of his arrival in India, leaving the flames of the Mahratta war still fiercely blazing. Holkar of Indore, the only chief who had survived the Lake-Wellesley tornado, had rallied Sikhs, Rajputs and Rohillas to his standard to make one final effort to check the ever-rising tide of English conquests : and for a time succeeded. He inflicted on Colonel Monson one of the worst defeats the English had yet suffered, and loudly boasted that he was going to drive them into the sea.

An unwise boast. Arthur Wellesley, like his brother, had returned to England, but Lord Lake had not, nor had he lost his flair for fighting Mahrattas. In a war that lasted nearly two years, he defeated them at Dig and Farrackhabad ; he relieved Delhi, to which they had laid siege ; he literally chivvied the over-ambitious Holkar all across Northern India. The Directors, appalled at the continuing expense, ordered him to make peace, he paid not the

faintest attention. Trade might be their business, war was his. He knew his India well enough to realise that the only peace the Mahrattas were likely to respect was a peace enforced by utter defeat and he was in a better position than even the Governor-General : for he was Commander-in-Chief, in whose appointment the Court of Directors under Pitt's India Bill had no say whatever. Which is no doubt why he, alone of the great conquerors, received instead of Parliamentary abuse a peerage and almost universal acclamation amid which Directorial criticism was silent or perhaps drowned.

He certainly deserved it, though actually he had not completed his work, for Holkar was allowed to make peace in December, 1805, ceding, as Scindia and Bhonsla had done, large portions of his territory ; like them excluding all foreigners save the English from his dominions, becoming one of the puppet princes of the Subsidiary System with the outward form and none of inward significance of royalty.

Lord Wellesley had returned to England ; Lord Cornwallis was dead ; India entered upon a period of uneasy peace and what may be termed a brief interregnum in the proconsulship : which proved to be the strongest possible argument in favour of proconsular government. While the Board of Control and the Court of Directors were wrangling as to who should take the place of the dead Governor-General the senior Member of Council, Sir George Barlow, carried on the Government. He has been rightly described as " an excellent revenue officer with none of the qualities of a Governor-General,"\* he was a tradesman not a statesman, with a passion for economy and a terror of war.

He made the peace with Holkar ; a peace of which Lake thoroughly disapproved and which was, indeed, to lead to a third Mahratta war eleven years later. He introduced, with the bland ignorance of

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\* E. Thornton, *History of the British Empire in India*.

the civilian, certain alterations in the status and dress \* of the Sepoys which caused a mutiny and a massacre at Vellore. He ordered cuts in pay which led to a mutiny of the English officers—though they stopped short of massacre. The Directors loved him, the Board of Control disliked him intensely and hastily replaced him with another aristocratic pro-consul, Lord Minto, who arrived in India in 1807.

The interregnum had ended ; and with it ended the Company's last serious effort to control the wide empire they had unwillingly and accidentally acquired.

\* One suggestion particularly obnoxious to the Sepoys was that they should exchange their *tungis* (commonly and erroneously called turbans) for the hard shiny hats of the English troops. This in itself, the Sepoys felt, was almost sufficient cause for mutiny. One can hardly blame them.

## PACIFIC INTENTIONS . . .

CONTROL WAS SLIPPING faster yet from their hands in England, though, with a rather pathetic self-delusion, the Company refused to admit it even to themselves. As a man on the verge of bankruptcy will often maintain an ostentatious style of living in order to delude and stave off his creditors, so the East India Company chose this, the moment when the sceptre of control was slipping from their grasp, to enlarge and beautify (or at any rate ornament) their buildings in Leadenhall Street, till East India House became a huge and portentous edifice ; an object of admiration to the simple and some amusement to the cynical ; a building which has received perhaps undue notice owing to the fact that it housed, quite accidentally, two men famous in English literature, Charles Lamb and James Mill. Every writer on the East India Company devotes considerable space to these two gentlemen, though it is difficult to see exactly why. They were civil servants ; that is to say they had unlimited paper and almost unlimited leisure ; so that, given any facility with the pen, they should have been writers, and writers of merit they undoubtedly were : but they played no part whatever in Indian history.

Contemporary with the aggrandisement of the

central offices was, the reform of administration in India : though this was the work of the Governor-Generals rather than of the Directors. As we have seen, Clive began the process of transforming the fortune-hunting writer into a conscientious civil servant. Cornwallis continued it, raising the salary of the Collectors to Rs. 1,500 a month and other ranks *pro rata* and strictly forbidding them to trade ; the commercial side being managed by commercial residents. Wellesley completed it by his foundation of a Civil Service College at Fort William, where the young assistant collector was taught Oriental languages, Indian law and customs.

It is typical of the haphazard way in which English institutions grow up that no one seems to have thought of this obvious and simple scheme before ; and typical of the mentality of the Directors, at one moment launching grandiose schemes to demonstrate their stability and perspicacity, at another feverishly and shortsightedly retrenching to secure higher dividends, that they discarded this eminently sensible plan—and promptly founded the East India College at Haileybury, which for nearly fifty years trained the finest body of civil servants the world has ever seen.

But, though the Directors might thus indulge in wishful thinking to their hearts' content, they could not check inexorable evolution. In 1813 the Charter came up for renewal, the Company stating in its petition that without its commercial privileges it could not maintain its territorial possessions, and that its commercial monopoly was "but an instrument for political purposes." Which was perhaps not a very tactful argument. For successive Ministers were increasingly convinced that the Company should not have any political purposes—such were the business of the Board of Control and the Governor-General—and almost every one was crying out, even more loudly, against monopoly.

Lord Liverpool's Bill (1813) was a blow to the

"Sovereign Estate" of the Company and to the long-held exclusive monopoly of the Court of Directors. Trade with India was permitted to everyone in ships up to a certain tonnage under licence from the Court of Directors; which in point of fact they were, for all practical purposes, debarred from refusing by a right of appeal to the Board of Control. The Company's accounts were to be kept under two separate heads, "Commerce" and "Territory," and the Board of Control obtained the right to appropriate not only all territorial revenues, but also surplus commercial profits. The approval of the Crown was made obligatory in selecting men for the higher appointments, which meant in effect that the Crown made these appointments—and the consent of the Board of Control was stipulated to the reinstatement of any suspended or dismissed servant, while at the same time it acquired considerable rights over the maintenance and output of Haileybury.

Such was the Charter of 1813. It meant that the Company, which had already lost all its political power to the Crown, now lost in addition an important part of the power to deal with its own commerce, expenditure and profits. Sir Josiah Child might (and no doubt did) turn in his grave, but it was an inevitable development. The little band of merchant-adventurers had acquired an Empire, accidentally it might be, but they had acquired it. They had become immense landowners, responsible for the well-being and happiness of millions of people from high-born Princes to the lowliest peasantry in the world; a sovereign realm with fleets and armies and vast possessions: they had grown, albeit much against their will, far beyond their commercial status; they had become a State within a State and as such could hardly hope to be tolerated by the State itself.

As Lord Grenville remarked at the time, "The British Crown is *de facto* sovereign in India. This sovereignty cannot now be renounced." Nor could the implications of sovereignty. The Ministers at

least agreed with the Directors on one point—that they wanted no further conquests. They had said so in Pitt's Bill, they said so again in Lord Liverpool's and the Governor-Generals who followed Wellesley agreed with them—in theory. But in practice they found that in the Orient at any rate one cannot stand still, one cannot be neutral. The Subsidiary System made them, willy-nilly, responsible for the internal order of the Subsidiary States ; the presence of large and war-like nations beyond their frontiers, who were not in the least interested in peace by arrangement, or indeed, save for brief uneasy intervals, in peace at all, made it imperative that they should continue to be ready for war. Just as the Company had taken up the sword for purposes of defence only and found it turn to a weapon of offence in their hands, so also on a grander scale did the Governor-Generals.

Lord Wellesley, a practical man, had seen that clearly : he had perceived that if he did not conquer Mysore and the Mahrattas, the Mahrattas or Mysore would conquer him, before turning to rend each other to the great and abiding misery of the inhabitants of India ; and, imbued with the feudal and aristocratic idea that it was his duty to look after his humble dependants, he did not hesitate to attack first. Lord Minto, more idealistic, did not see it, but the result was exactly the same. He did not want wars, he preferred to make treaties, hoping against hope that the treaties would endure, treaties with Shuja-ul-Mulk, King of Kabul, with Ranjit Singh, ruler of the Sikhs, and many another ; but wars were forced upon him, wars to maintain internal order as in the suppression of the outbreak in Travancore, wars to secure the frontiers. The tide of compulsory conquest rolled on slowly during the governorship of Lord Minto, with ever-accelerating speed under his successor, Lord Hastings ; and rolled beyond the limits of India proper.

. . . AND WARLIKE RESULTS

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**T**HIS TRANS-INDIAN POLICY produced one place name which was to loom large in world history.

The early struggles of the Company with the Dutch and the triumph of the latter have been recorded in previous chapters, but history has a knack of moving in circles, and this particular circle was soon to be completed. Napoleon, rampaging across Europe, took Holland in his stride, just as Hitler was to do 150 years later, leaving the Dutch colonies like motherless orphans at the mercy of any conveniently-placed snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. In the mid-twentieth century the snapping-up was done by the Japanese, in the late 18th century it was done by the English, who on no excuse at all, save the excuse of self-preservation, seized Malacca in 1795 :\* and followed it up in 1810 with the capture of Amboyna (thus at long last avenging the now-forgotten massacre), and Batavia, and with the utter defeat of the French and Dutch at the battle of Weltevreden in 1811. Lord Minto, temporarily

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\* In the same year and for the same reasons they seized Cape Town. Quite a lot of the British Empire owes its existence entirely to the all-conquering Corsican.



forgetting his pacific intentions, accompanied the expedition in person ; but the real hero of the venture was one of the last of the true merchant-adventurers whom the Company had produced in such numbers.

Sir Stamford Raffles was made Governor of all these acquisitions "as an acknowledgment of the services he had rendered and in consideration of his peculiar fitness for the office," and ruled Java, which he called justly enough "the other India," as it has never been ruled before or since. But 1814 saw the end of the long French wars, save for the meteoric episode of the Hundred Days and Parliament, as usual blissfully ignorant of things Oriental, returned Java, Amboyna and the Banda Islands to the Dutch, a feat of fatuous generosity for which their descendants 130 years later were to pay rather dearly.

Raffles found himself suddenly deprived of most of his Governorship. Not all of it. He still held Malacca and he had seen the possibilities of a little island lying at the extreme southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. It was a deserted, jungle-covered, mosquito-haunted swamp, but it had not always been so. As early as the 9th century, according to the Arab chroniclers—and the Arabs were the geographers and historians of those days—it had held a noble city, Tumasik, the capital of a great kingdom embracing much of Malaya and ruled by a dynasty of Malay chiefs who claimed Alexander the Great as their ancestor through one of his descendants who, with considerable originality, married a mermaid : presumably the first amphibious operation. The story is no doubt apocryphal : but, whatever the pedigree of these ancient monarchs, it is reasonably certain that they and their kingdoms were wiped out at the end of the 14th century by Majapahit, the Hindu conqueror of Java and Sumatra, who levelled Tumasik to the ground. The jungle came in and swallowed up the ruins, as the jungle always does in the East, blotting out all traces of that once thriving city, and

the island reverted to its pristine wildness ; so to remain for more than four centuries.

Neither the Portuguese, the Dutch nor the early adventurers of the East India Company had realised its possibilities : but Raffles did, and on his own authority he leased the island from the Sultan of Johore for a yearly rental roughly equivalent to £400. It was one of the best bargains the East India Company ever made, for in a century of amazing yet peaceful progress the silent mangrove-shadowed creeks and bays were to develop into the greatest harbour in Asia, "the second gateway of the wide world's trade," the jungle was to be transformed, as if by magic, into a magnificent modern city, the lion city of Singapore.

Raffles deserved, one feels, every honour for his foresight and imagination. But the Directors of the East India Company were not abundantly blessed with either of these qualities, and they were suffering from their usual mania for misplaced economy, nor had Raffles any influential family connections to support him at home. Far from being rewarded he was recalled and severely censured and, when he died a few years later, a disappointed and embittered man, another victim of the gratitude of England, the Company actually took the fantastic step of sending his widow a bill for £10,000 for "the expenses of the expedition to Singapore." Truly, they were not designed as Empire builders.

At about the same time another famous island passed under British control. Ceylon had been first colonised, in so far as the coastal belt was concerned, by the Portuguese, who had been as usual ousted by the Dutch. The Company had made one or two half-hearted and unsuccessful efforts to found factories there, as for instance at Trincomalee, but when Napoleon overran Holland they saw their chance ; and took it as they had taken it at Malacca. Only to discover, as they had discovered so reluctantly in India, that they could not confine themselves to

coastal belts, they must either go on or get out. The King of Kandy, who ruled all the centre of the island, was a particularly unpleasant specimen of the Oriental despot, cruel beyond dreams of sadism, vicious and treacherous. There was only one possible method of dealing with him : complete suppression. Accordingly, after many fumbling and false starts, so characteristic of the growth of the British Empire, and including the massacre of one British force, Kandy was occupied in 1815 ; a serious but, in the end, abortive rising was crushed in 1817, and Ceylon as a whole enjoyed for the first time in its long history a period of justice, peace and prosperity under British rule.

Meanwhile in India, Lord Minto's appointment had terminated in 1813. Lord Hastings, who succeeded him, more pacific in intention, was destined to be even more warlike in action. He had, during the trial of his namesake (but no relation) Warren Hastings and at the time of Wellesley's struggle with the Mahrattas, waxed eloquent in denunciation of these endless Indian wars, which he considered to be not only wasteful but wicked. He had in fact talked the usual rubbish which was talked in England by men who knew nothing of the East : but he had barely landed in India, at the age of 59, before he discovered his mistake.

Mr. Canning put it very well a few years later when, as President of the Board of Control, he spoke in favour of a vote of thanks to Lord Hastings for winning one of the very wars he so much disliked waging.

"Anxious as I am for the prosperity and grandeur of our Indian Empire, I confess I look at its indefinite extension with awe. I earnestly wish that it may be possible to remain stationary where we are : and what still exists of substantive and independent power in India may stand untouched and unimpaired. But this consummation, however much it may be desired, depends not on ourselves alone. Aggression must be

repelled and perfidy must be visited with its just reward. And while I join with the thinking part of the country in deprecating advance, who shall say there is safety for such a power as ours in retrogradation ? ”

Precisely. It was just what Lord Hastings had found and, being an honest man able enough to acknowledge his own mistakes, he admitted it. He could hardly have helped doing so.

“ Aggression must be repelled ” ; and beyond the North-Eastern frontier a warrior people were becoming very aggressive indeed. The Gurkhas proper were originally Rajputs, who, driven out of India by the Mohammedan invasion, had taken refuge in the foothills of the Himalayas, had gradually conquered and, conquering, had intermarried and intermingled with the Nepalese tribes of Mongolian origin. From the military point of view it was a happy combination, for the Gurkhas (as the whole mixed race is usually, if incorrectly, called) were and are one of the finest breeds of fighters on earth ; and they were rendered even more self-confident by the nature of their country, which they considered, not without justification, to be impregnable.

But now they encountered an even finer fighting breed. Lord Hastings, still hopefully pacific, was very patient, meeting outrage and encroachment on the frontier with “ strong notes ” quite in the modern style. The Gurkhas, true Orientals in that they understood strength and only strength, laughed at him, increased their raids into British territory, actually occupied two districts in Bengal.

“ Aggression must be repelled.” In November, 1814, three British columns entered the hill country on the first of the frontier expeditions which were to play so large a part in the history of British India. It was a case of Greek meeting Greek, and the tug-of-war was bitter and fiercely contested. In May, 1815, the Gurkha general sued for peace and agreed to surrender the disputed district. The treaty was sent

down to Calcutta and up to Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal, for ratification and in the inevitable delay the Gurkhas took heart again. They were very sorry, they said, in effect, with almost Japanese politeness, but in the interval the war party had regained the upper hand in their councils ; the war must go on.

The war went on. Sir David Ochterlony and his men inched their way through the vast pathless forests, which the Gurkhas believed had been placed there by the gods themselves to protect the sacred land of Nepal, emerged at last with shouts of relief on the open plain—to see stretched before them the second stronger line of defence, the mountains, with a Gurkha army holding every pass. Lieutenant Pickersgill, sent to reconnoitre, eventually fell in with a band of smugglers who, for a consideration, agreed to show him a secret way ; and, rather surprisingly, proved as good as their word. Ochterlony took the astonished Gurkhas, still patiently watching the passes, in the rear, defeated them after fierce and prolonged fighting and marched on Khatmandu.

The Rajah was equal to the occasion. With the same ingratiating politeness he informed Ochterlony through an envoy that he was pleased to inform him that the anti-war party was now definitely in the ascendant and that he would be glad to make peace.

“Peace !” retorted Ochterlony, a grim, blunt Scotsman with no pretensions to politeness. “Has your master the effrontery to offer me peace when he has nothing to give but what I choose to leave him ? He deserves to have Khatmandu burned to the ground for his insolence. Fall down and beg for mercy in his name.”

This was the kind of language the envoy understood. He duly fell on his knees and grovelled. Peace was signed in March, 1816, the Company adding Sikkim, Garwhal and Kumaon to their territories : and, more important still, securing a faithful and valuable ally, who from that day has never swerved from fidelity and, while retaining complete independ-

ence, has supplied some of the best troops to the Indian Army.

"Perfidy must be visited with its just reward." Hastings was confronted with perfidy in plenty. The Mahrattas, it will be recalled, had in 1805 been permitted, by the short-sightedly parsimonious policy of the Company and in flat defiance of the advice and wishes of Wellesley and Lake, to make peace before they were completely subdued. They used it, as Lake had foreseen, to build up their strength for a fresh war and meanwhile to harry the English by any underground method that might offer. They secretly encouraged the Pindharis, robber bands each under its own chief, but not averse at times to combining under one leader for some especial raid, who were the curse of Central India. Well-organised and securely based in the deep valleys of the Narbada, mobile and ferociously cruel, they swooped yearly on peaceful villages in the territories of subsidiary princes or even of the Company itself, massacring, torturing and raping the inhabitants, or looting and burning their homes if they had had sufficient warning to take refuge in the jungle. Unpunished, their forays grew fiercer, went further. In 1815, taking advantage of the fact that the Company was heavily involved in Nepal, they attacked Deccan. In 1816, emboldened by success, they raided the Northern Circars, plundering 339 villages in one feverish fortnight.

At a later date such ebullitions of Oriental high spirits would no doubt have been considered as the natural, if regrettable, expression of a natural Indian desire for independence. But Hastings did not see things quite in that light. He was perfectly aware of the Mahratta encouragement, perfectly aware that the suppression of the Pindharis would probably involve him in war with Scindia and the Peishwa. But, in imagination, he saw the smoke of burning villages, heard the groans of tortured men and the shrieks of ravished women, the men and women whom in his old-fashioned way he conceived it was his duty

to protect, who, he believed, preferred security to self-government. He raised the largest army the Company had yet put into the field, surrounded the robber strongholds with a ring of steel relentlessly closing in. By the spring of 1818 the Pindharis, whose name had spread terror throughout India for a generation, were utterly destroyed.

But, inevitably, the destruction involved war with the Mahrattas. For some years past the Peishwa, under the influence of his obscene minister, Trimbakji, had been growing steadily less friendly. He aimed at reviving the Mahratta Confederacy with himself at its head, gave ample if secret aid to the Pindharis. Hastings countered by concluding treaties with Nagpur and Scindia of Gwalior, in the latter case using the army which had been prepared for the Pindhari campaign to force him to sign a treaty which, as a contemporary historian put it, was "contrary to his inclination but consonant to his interests."\* Holkar, as usual, held aloof until it was too late, and the Gaekwar of Baroda's Brahmin minister refused, in spite of all blandishments, to commit his demented master to anything so foolish as an anti-British alliance: whereupon Trimbakji had him assassinated. To murder a Brahmin is by far the worst crime in the Hindu calendar and certainly the wrath of the gods seemed to descend upon Trimbakji. Baji Rao, the Peishwa, frightened by Lord Hastings' firmness, repudiated his minister (who escaped imprisonment by the connivance of a groom singing Blondel-like beneath his prison window) and signed the treaty of Poona in June, 1817, only to break it in November when he considered that the English armies were fully occupied with the Pindharis: the Mahrattas always had a most Hitlerian outlook on treaties. But his treachery availed him little. In spite of enormous

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\* Sir John Malcolm *Memoirs of Central India*. Malcolm was not only a historian but a distinguished soldier who played a great part in the campaigns against the Pindharis and Mahrattas.

odds in his favour, he was completely defeated by Colonel Barr, and surrendered in June, 1818, to Sir John Malcolm.

Meanwhile Holkar of Indore had made up his mind, as on a previous occasion, just too late. He concluded an alliance with Appa Sahib, who had succeeded to the throne of Berar, and the two chiefs attacked the English in November, 1818; that is to say just after the defeat of the Pindharis and the Peishwa, whose continued presence in the field might have turned the scale. It is interesting to note to how great an extent this consistent and constitutional incapacity for union among Indians helped the English to gain an Empire.

Appa Sahib's effort lasted three weeks, Holkar's little more than six; a brief attempt at further treachery on the part of Scindia was dealt with even more summarily. The third and last Mahratta war came to an end in April, 1819. The Mahratta confederacy was broken up; the chiefs were reduced to the subsidiary status; their states enclosed within carefully demarcated limits; large tracts of their territory came under direct British rule; the Mahratta menace was ended for all time.\*

Lord Hastings certainly deserved his vote of thanks, the list of the military successes of his long Viceroyalty reading like the battle honours of a famous regiment. But he was not only a highly successful, if unwilling organiser of victory, he was a great administrator: and, if he spent money regally, he managed to pay his way. He had two strokes of financial good fortune. In 1814 the Nawab of Oudh died and, two claimants appearing for the

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\* The Mahratta wars had one minor but pleasing result. Hitherto officers of the Company's service, though the best-paid army in the world, were debarred from the Order of the Bath. Now it was thrown open to them, Sir David Ochterlony, who had campaigned as successfully against the Mahrattas as against Nepal, being the first recipient thus to "obliterate a distinction painful for the officers of the Honourable Company."



succession, Hastings sold it to the highest bidder for a cool £2,000,000 sterling : and in 1816 died also the famous Fyzabad Begum, whose treatment by Warren Hastings had raised such a storm twenty years before. The old lady apparently bore no malice : for, unable to take her money with her to the grave as she would have dearly loved to do, she bequeathed it to the Company, who netted yet another £2,000,000.

But Hastings' financial policy did not depend solely on windfalls. He budgetted so carefully that the deficit of 1818-1821, due to the Nepalese and Mahratta wars, had, without imposing extra taxation, become a surplus in the final years of his administration ; and he gained the confidence of the Indian Princes to such an extent that they began to invest their money in Government securities. Further, in extra financial matters, he reopened canals, constructed roads, improved Calcutta and other cities. He admitted Eurasians to Government service, and they have served their father (as it generally is) country loyally and well. He encouraged education and gave a certain definitely (and rightly) restricted freedom to the Press, both British and Indian, little realising what a nest of scurrilous hornets he was breeding for the misfortune of his successors. He had owed his appointment solely to his friendship with the Prince Regent, which was hardly a testimonial to ability or efficiency, but he proved himself fully worthy of a place in that great dynasty of Governor-Generals : and it is the greatest tragedy that the end of his long reign was shadowed and marred by his blind support of the shady banking transactions of Palmer and Co., the English bankers in Hyderabad, which caused his resignation in 1823; an unhappy affair in which he sacrificed his reputation, which he valued beyond all things, to the passion of others for amassing wealth—a passion in which he did not participate and by the indulgence of which he was to gain nothing.



A cartoon by "Argus," depicting the attack on the Company's monopoly, which resulted in the throwing open of trade with India in 1813



## LOSS OF THE FAME, EAST INDIAN.

This vessel in which Sir Stamford Raffles & family were coming to England with a vast collection of natural history was destroyed by fire on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1824.

*The property lost by Sir Stamford was valued at £25,000*

But it is significant that, for all the scandal that the affair caused, no attempt was made to attack him on his return to England. No parliamentary jackal snapped at this lion's heels. The Governor-Generals had become in fact unassailable ; were, with the deserved exception, to remain so till long after one Mutiny : and, being unassailable, got on better with the Company whose servants they still were in theory and whose policies, at least in India, they dominated in fact.

A natural result of the improved relationship between the Governor-General and the Directors was the improved relationship between the Directors and the Ministry. Pleasant little acts of courtesy took place. When the Governorship of Bombay fell vacant in 1818, George Canning politely informed the Directors that he, as Minister of the Crown, would confirm any selection from among their own men which they cared to make : and, in 1822, when it became necessary to choose a Governor-General in succession to Lord Hastings, the Court of Directors offered the position to Canning himself, who was only prevented from accepting by his sudden appointment as Foreign Secretary.

But such amenities did not alter the fact that the Company no longer exercised any real control over their Governor-Generals ; and it did not alter the fact that in one important particular the Governor-Generals no longer exercised much control over their own policy. It is easier to draw the sword than to sheathe it ; and it became almost a commonplace for each new Governor-General to go out full of the most peaceful intentions only to find himself involved in inevitable wars.

## THE DAWN OF MODERN INDIA

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**L**ORD AMHERST who, on Canning's refusal, accepted the appointment in 1823, was no exception, and he discovered a new enemy : or to be more accurate a new enemy discovered him.

The Burmese had had a long switchback history of endless wars with their Siamese neighbours, alternate victories and defeats, but their attention had always been turned eastwards. Then in 1752 they produced their greatest man, Alompra the Hunter, "the Napoleon of the Hindu-Chinese peninsula," who in the short eight years of his reign (1752-1760) smashed the Siamese, penetrated far south into Malaya and, most significant of all from the English point of view, knitted together the various warring chieftains and races of what is now called Burma into one cohesive and aggressive kingdom to which his successors added the North-Eastern province of Arakan : and Arakan, as the English were to discover a century and a half later, is dangerously close to the Indian frontier.

Further, whatever merits the Burmese may have possessed as conquerors, they were extremely poor colonists, and the Arakanese, having endured extortion and oppression for many years, at last in 1798

fled, to the number of 30,000, across the frontier to the protection of the English. The Company's officials at Chittagong certainly did not want them, but equally certainly, in common humanity, they could not turn them out. They did not turn them out and the "Golden King" of Burma was extremely annoyed. He was a potentate with an extremely high opinion of his own ability and power—a few years previously he had offered to drive Napoleon off the face of the earth, and been not a little hurt and surprised when this generous offer was refused—and demanded that the refugees be handed back to him forthwith or he would seize Bengal. Unmoved by the threat the Company again refused.

A period of hardly-veiled hostility and insulting messages followed, while the Burmese grew more and more arrogant, more and more convinced of their own invincibility. "The English," they remarked on one occasion, "have conquered the black foreigners, the people of castes, who have puny frames and no courage (a rather curious commentary on the Mah-rattas or the Gurkhas). They have never fought with a people so strong and brave as the Burmese, skilled in the use of spear and sword": till eventually, trusting no doubt to their skill in these terrible weapons, they embarked on open hostilities, seizing a small island off Chittagong in 1823.

Lord Amherst, newly arrived in India, was genuinely anxious to avoid war. He sent politely-worded requests for withdrawal and apology: having yet to learn, as his predecessors had learned before him, that the Oriental always takes any attempt at compromise as a sign of cowardice on the part of the compromiser; as perhaps it is. The Burmese, like the Gurkhas before them, laughed at him and prepared openly for an invasion of Bengal.

Preconsular patience is not inexhaustible. Lord Amherst, very unwillingly, declared war: and when Bandoola, the Burmese general, announcing that "Bengal will now become in fact what it has always

'been in right, a province of the Golden King," crossed the frontier, retaliated by seizing Rangoon.

It was not one of England's most glorious wars. If the Burmese were held in Bengal, after creating a near panic among the inhabitants of a province who have never been conspicuous for their courage, the English were equally held in Rangoon where they almost starved, for the astounding reason that the Indian Government gave orders that the cattle, in which the country was rich, were not to be touched for fear of offending the Burmese : a characteristic-ally English method of waging war. Bandoola was recalled to deal with them and very nearly succeeded. But, in February, 1825, the English, under Sir Archibald Campbell, advanced up the Irawaddy, were defeated, retreated, advanced again to besiege Donabew where Bandoola was killed by a lucky shell.

The death of this brave and capable soldier broke the back of the Burmese resistance. They were defeated again and again, driven, with the co-operation of the British Navy using steamers for the first time in the history of warfare, farther and farther up the Irawaddi until finally, when Campbell was within 50 miles of their capital, Ava, the Golden King sued for peace. He was left independent, a mistake as subsequent years were to prove,\* but considerably weakened : renouncing all claims to Assam, ceding in perpetuity the provinces of Arakan, Yea, Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim, undertaking to pay a million rupees towards the expenses of the war and to permit British trade throughout his dominions.

The last clause was a concession to the old commercialism of the Company, the rest an admission of the new spirit of conquest. The unwilling Empire-builders had acquired an enormous new tract of territory, which they certainly did not want, at the

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\* A second Burmese war broke out in 1852 and a third in 1886, which led to what should have been done in the first place : annexation.

cost of 20,000 English lives and 14,000,000 English pounds. Not one of England's most glorious wars : and wars, as the present century is so painfully aware, tend to breed wars. The defeats in Burma were not without their repercussions in India. The Delhi mob openly shouted in the streets "The rule of the *Kum-pani* is at an end" : and the unrest culminated and found its outlet in the affair of Bhurtpore.

On the death of the Rajah in 1826, the Resident, Sir David Ochterlony, recognised his infant son as his successor. The Rajah's brother, Durjan Sal, did not. He promptly seized the fortress, reputed to be one of the strongest in India, which even Lord Lake had failed to subdue, and declared himself Regent. Ochterlony, equally promptly, called out the troops and issued a proclamation urging the inhabitants to rally round their lawful ruler, the infant.

But he omitted to ask Lord Amherst's approval, and Lord Amherst did not approve. He was a very worried man. The Burmese war was still dragging on, far more prolonged and expensive than he had anticipated, and he was most unwilling to indulge in a new war in India. Ochterlony was rebuked, it must be admitted, with unnecessary severity, sent in his resignation, and died a few years later, yet another victim of England's gratitude.

All to no purpose, conquest in the East had become like a bolting horse. The Governor-Generals might tug as they would at the reins of pacifism—and, with the exception of Lord Wellesley, they did most honestly and sincerely strive for peace—the horse, the bit well between its teeth, continued to bolt. Ochterlony's proclamation had been issued and could not be withdrawn, Durjan Sal was in the fortress and had not the slightest intention of leaving. Bhurtpore became a sort of test case. Would the English, already according to popular rumour defeated in Burma, meekly submit in Bhurtpore? If they did, all India would rise against them ; already adventurers from every quarter were flocking to the stan-



dard of Durjan Sal, civil war was raging throughout the state. Lord Amherst, one imagines, shrugged his shoulders and loosened his grip on the reins. Conquest must continue. Conquer or be conquered, govern or get out : there was no other alternative in the East, and at least the Burmese war was now over. Where Lord Lake had failed, the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Combermere, succeeded, Bhurtpore was taken by storm after a siege of five weeks, the fortress was razed to the ground, Durjan Sal deported.

It was a salutary lesson and it marked a step further in the paramountcy of England. In the earlier treaties the native Princes had been treated as equals. In the time of Lord Wellesley they had become subsidiaries, but with the right to manage their own domestic affairs. Now a further proviso was in effect added ; that such management must not only be just and efficient, but also subject to the Company's or at any rate the Governor-General's, approval. Nobody, not the Directors, not the Governor-Generals, wanted this : it was forced upon them by the fact, which no idealistic wishful thinking could disguise, that, taken as a whole, the Indian Princes were no more capable of managing internal affairs than they were of managing external.

The Indian Princes took the lesson to heart. They learnt that however badly the English might fare abroad—and the rumours of defeat generally turned out to be grossly exaggerated—they remained supreme in India. The Oriental understands and appreciates the strong hand ; and when it is combined with justice and toleration—and from Lord Wellesley onward the English never failed in that—they love it. India became quiet, the bolting horse, as it were, having galloped itself to a standstill, settled down to graze in the meadows of peace and prosperity.

From the point of view of the Company as a commercial concern it was high time. The debt had reached the enormous figure of £13,000,000, they were already beginning to worry about the

renewal of the Charter due in 1833 ; they insisted, very strongly to the new Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, that his policy must be Peace and Retrenchment : and, owing to the lesson of Bhurtpore, he was granted a period of tranquillity, a sort of oasis of tranquillity in the desert of compulsory conquest, in which to carry it out. But, if retrenchment is an excellent theory, it is seldom popular. Lord William, after careful consideration, described the Indian Army as "the least efficient and most expensive in the world." Which was not altogether untrue. Up to, roughly, 1825 the English officer in India had been almost completely cut off from his home country. He lived in and for India, he frequently married Indian women, he was in the closest touch with his own men, and personal contact means everything in the Indian Army. But the coming of steam and the opening up of the overland route—Lord Amherst was the first Governor-General to use it—had changed all that. England was no longer a far, almost forgotten land, English women began to arrive in large numbers, the cantonments became Anglicised. It all worked out very well in the end, but the transition stage as usual was difficult and Lord William was not over-tactful. He ruthlessly halved the allowances, the *batta* and half-*batta*, a bone of contention even in Clive's day, which bore particularly heavy on the junior officers and at a time when reductions in the establishment made promotion slow and difficult : and he abolished capital punishment, an enactment which, whatever the arguments in its favour may be to-day, was premature—flogging was not abolished in the British Army till 1868—and had to be repealed twelve years later. These measures were unpopular, but at least they did not lead to mutiny as in Sir George Barlow's day, and in the long run they proved their worth : from the days of Lord William Bentinck till the present time there was probably no finer body of officers in the world than the officers of the Indian Army. Nor did the Civil

•Service escape. Here, too, pay was cut and, in addition, the Governor-General introduced a system of confidential reports which were bitterly resented as "inquisitional espionage" and subsequently dropped.

All such measures at any rate saved money, but Lord William was not satisfied. He acquired a positive passion for retrenchment, the most curious instance of which was that he was only with great difficulty prevented from demolishing that miracle of loveliness, the Taj Mahal, and selling the marble by auction. But he was not content with saving money, he also wanted to make money, and here at least he was eminently successful, augmenting the revenue by treaties with Malwa and Rajputana, under which, in consideration of annual payments, they handed over the right of growing opium to the English: by reassessing the land in the Company's territories so as to include holders of land previously exempt but now found to have invalid titles; and by the assessment of land in the North-Western provinces.

But Lord William's reforms were not all administrative and financial. If he was not forced to actual conquest, yet he was forced to use the strong hand: not only as his predecessors had used it, as when he was compelled by a rebellion in Mysore to place that country under the direct administration of British officials—the only break in the sequence of Indian good government which that state has enjoyed since Arthur Wellesley destroyed the dynasty of Haidar Ali—but also in a new direction. Hitherto the English had been most careful in no way to interfere with Indian religion and religious observances, Hindu or Moslem. Warren Hastings had respected the seclusion of the Begums of Oudh, even if he had half-starved them from a discreet distance. Arthur Wellesley after the capture of Seringapatam, had refused to release Christian women who, according to a French missionary, were imprisoned in the zenana. But it is one thing to respect religions, another to tolerate

excesses committed in the name of these religions, and English public opinion was becoming increasingly perturbed over two such abuses in particular.

One was the ceremonial burning of widows, erroneously known as *Sati*. *Sati* actually means "a pure and virtuous woman," which any wife, who, rather than survive her husband, mounted (or was thrown on to) his funeral pyre, was considered to be ; but it had come to be applied to the rite itself ; to this drastic method of ensuring the complete and permanent fidelity of widows. Actually it was not an intrinsic part of the Hindu religion. Manu, the great Hindu law-giver, does not mention it, though he has a good deal to say about the desirability of complete fidelity to the dead. But the custom of centuries had made it so. Instances of *Sati* on an enormous scale are to be found throughout Indian history, in the story of Vijayanagar, the great Hindu empire of the extreme South, in the records of Rajput chivalry where *Sacca*, the wholesale burning of women to prevent them from falling into the hands of the conquerors, was a common occurrence. The Moghuls, who thought it foolish to use pretty young women as fuel, had tried to stop it ; the Mahrattas, Hindus though they were, had forbidden it ; earlier Governor-Generals had made half-hearted efforts at suppression ; but the terrible custom persisted, gaining strength. Lord William Bentinck, a man of very advanced Liberal views and with a growing weight of public opinion behind him, felt in his own words "a dreadful responsibility, hanging over his head in this world and the next, if, as the Governor-General of India, he was to consent to the continuation of this practice," and on December 14th, 1829, promulgated his famous Regulation XVII which "declared the practice of *Sati* illegal and punishable by the Criminal Courts as culpable homicide." This had a considerable, if not complete, effect in the Presidencies, but the practice still flourished (if that is the correct word) for many subsequent years in the states : and, taking

India as a whole, it cannot be said to be entirely stamped out now : there was a case in the Bombay Presidency as recently as 1938.

He was more successful in his suppression of the other abuse. The Thugs were a kind of religious secret society who strangled travellers with a sacred cord (one hopes that this sanctity was a consolation to their victims) and, after combining business with holiness by taking their money, buried them in a grave consecrated to Kali, the Hindu Goddess of Destruction. (It is worth noting, in parenthesis, that all the horrors perpetrated in India under the guise of religion, from *Sati* to *Thuggi* through child marriage to inadvertent cruelty to cows by keeping them alive, wasted, diseased and half-starving, because they are too sacred to be killed, are the offspring of that queer and dangerous mixture of abstruse spirituality, obscene sensuality and ferocious cruelty, Hinduism.) They were in fact wholesale religious murderers and "wholesale" is the *mot juste*. One Thug alone confessed to 719 murders, and the total of their victims must have run into hundreds of thousands. As in the case of *Sati* the Moghuls and previous Governor-Generals had tried to stamp it out, but Lord William was more thorough and more successful. He created a special department under Sir William Sleeman to deal with these pests, and *Thuggi* vanished from the Indian picture : or was said to have vanished. It is fairly certain that some at least of the many mysterious and apparently pointless murders that take place in India every year are the work of *Thuggi*.

On quite another and pleasanter side of life, Lord William Bentinck introduced an innovation which was to prove a blessing to countless white men and women. He was the father of the Hill-Stations, founding Simla in the North-West which has been ever since the summer seat of the Government of India, and buying the site of Darjeeling in the North-East from the Rajah of Sikkim. Yet this was

but a beneficent facet of the policy, accidental or intentional, which is Lord William Bentinck's chief contribution to the drama of the East India Company.

In a word, he began the Westernisation of India.

Warren Hastings, the last of the Company's Governors, had been Oriental in outlook, steeped in Indian lore and literature, fluent in several Indian languages, a friend of many Indians, a believer in the theory that India should be governed by Indian methods, with the Company as a kind of semi-divine arbitrator and court of appeal. Cornwallis, the first of the Proconsuls, knew not a word of an Indian language, cared nothing for Indian customs and religions, conceived himself as a kind of super-schoolmaster trying to the best of his ability to give justice and prosperity to a crowd of incomprehensible brown children. Wellesley and his immediate successors were too occupied in conquest to have time for anything else. It was the period of quiet which succeeded the storming of Bhurtpore which gave Lord William Bentinck the opportunity of introducing a new policy—to the ultimate undoing of his country.

The Charter of 1833, of which more will be heard in the ensuing chapter, had changed the character of the Company, the Reform Bill had changed the character of government in England, the subversive ideas engendered by the French Revolution were seeping slowly through Europe ; and Lord William Bentinck was in many ways a man ahead of his time, which is popularly supposed to be a compliment and is very often just the reverse. With the best possible intentions in administration, in education and in control of the Press, he initiated a policy which in the long run was to have cataclysmic results.

In administration he found that the Civil Service was badly understaffed and overworked. The obvious step of increasing the number of English officials was repugnant to his idea of economy, and he overcame the difficulty by throwing the lower grades of the

Civil Service, including minor Judgeships, open to Indians on the lines suggested by Sir Charles Metcalfe, who was to succeed him for a short interim period as Governor-General; and more than suggested by the Charter Act of 1833 which proclaimed that "no native of the said territories shall by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office or employment under the Company." The Directors, commenting on the Act to his Lordship, took this to mean "that there shall be no governing caste in British India. Fitness, wholly irrespective of the distinction of races, is henceforth to be the criticism of eligibility. To this altered rule, it will be necessary that you should, both in your acts and your language, conform: practically, perhaps, no very marked difference of results will be occasioned."

Lord William was only too ready to conform; but a hundred years were to show a marked "difference of results."

Yet this experiment, dangerous though it was, might not have had any bad effects, might in fact have worked well, had it not been for a second great, and in the end disastrous, mistake—the Westernisation of Indian education. The blame for this, however, cannot be wholly attributed to Lord William Bentinck. The Charter Act added a fourth member, who was not to be in the Company's service, to the Governor-General's Council, and Lord Macaulay, who had been Secretary to the Board of Control, was selected for the post. Lord Macaulay, of whom it has been very rightly said that he possessed "the cocksure confidence that is characteristic of a very clever man without a spark of genius," rushed in where the most conceited angel would have hesitated to tread. Illiteracy in India was extremely high, education had been much neglected, but, in so far as it had been considered at all, it had produced two schools of thought: the "Orientalists," who favoured Indian education, and the "Anglicists," who believed

that money should be spent on English education and English education only. The Directors, in so far as they thought about it all beyond resenting the fact that they had to spend any money on education, were, if anything, in favour of the latter school. In 1813, when as part of the price they had to pay for that particular renewal of their Charter, they were compelled to spend 100,000 rupees a year on education in India, they stipulated that it should be spent on "any learning that is useful. But," they added gloomily, "we suspect that there is little in Hindu or Moslem literature that is."

Lord William was inclined to agree with them, Lord Macaulay had no doubt whatever. He knew no Sanskrit or Arabic, he knew nothing and cared less for the glories of Indian literature. What matter? In his view the unfortunate Indian, as for obvious reasons he could not study Latin or Greek (even Macaulay never suggested that), must be made to study the works of great English writers, Milton, Hallam, Locke and, above all of course, Macaulay. He promulgated this very debatable theory in his usual impeccable style in the famous minute on Education in February, 1835, and, so doing, fired a train which was ultimately to blow the English not only out of supremacy but out of India altogether. For reading the English classics meant learning the English language, which the conservative Mohammedans were slow to do; so that, English having become the official language, the Hindus obtained an influence far beyond their merits. Further, the Brahmins, the high-caste Hindus, reading with secret amusement the democratic theories so hopelessly unsuitable for India, realised what a weapon had been put into their hands by the very men against whom they proposed to use it: and, lastly, the English system of education raised up in India an *intelligentsia* for whom it was and would be impossible to find the clerical and Civil Service jobs for which their souls craved, and who therefore, as men with undigested



education and a sense of grievance always do, took to political agitation as a career with results that are only too clearly visible to-day.

Finally, and as a sort of corollary to the above, the freedom of the Press. Lord Amherst, it will be remembered, had allowed a certain very limited freedom, Lord William Bentinck, and to a far greater degree, Sir Charles Metcalfe after him, removed these restrictions, actually granting to the Indian vernacular Press far greater liberty than was enjoyed in England : an act of misguided benevolence which led to the establishment of the most scurrilous, abusive and irresponsible Press in the world, the Indian vernacular Press of to-day.

Lord William Bentinck retired in 1835, exactly 100 years before the iniquitous India Bill which was the logical outcome of his policy. On a statue raised to his memory in Calcutta, Macaulay, who liked him, inscribed these words, "He abolished cruel rites : he effaced humiliating distinctions : he gave liberty to the expression of public opinion : his constant study was to elevate the intellectual and moral character of the nations committed to his charge." Thornton, on the other hand, a far more reliable historian who apparently did not like him, maintained that he did "less for the interest of India and for his own reputation than any who had occupied his place since the commencement of the 19th century, with the single exception of Sir George Barlow" ; and sums up his administration with the crushing criticism that "but for the noble triumph of the abolition of *sati*, if his administration were obliterated, posterity would scarcely observe the deficiency, while it is certain that they would have very little reason to regret it."

The reader can take his choice : to the writer it seems obvious that, alone of the great proconsuls, Lord William Bentinck failed in his task and failed abysmally ; so that in the long run his policy, paved like the road to Hell with good intentions, far from gaining an Empire as his immediate predecessors had

done, was a century later to lose an Empire : and it is a significant and noticeable fact that these fatal mistakes were made at the very moment when a lull in the career of compulsory conquest gave him the opportunity of consolidating these conquests for all time. Far better had he devoted his attention to subduing those independent Indian States who were yet to cause trouble ; to enforcing English order and justice in those subsidiary states where his obstinate policy of non-intervention, save in the case of Mysore, led to a renewal of anarchy and misery. Possibly Providence knows her job better than the politicians : and Providence would have inscribed in the plinth of his statue that most damning of all criticisms, "He meant well."

## THE END OF COMMERCE

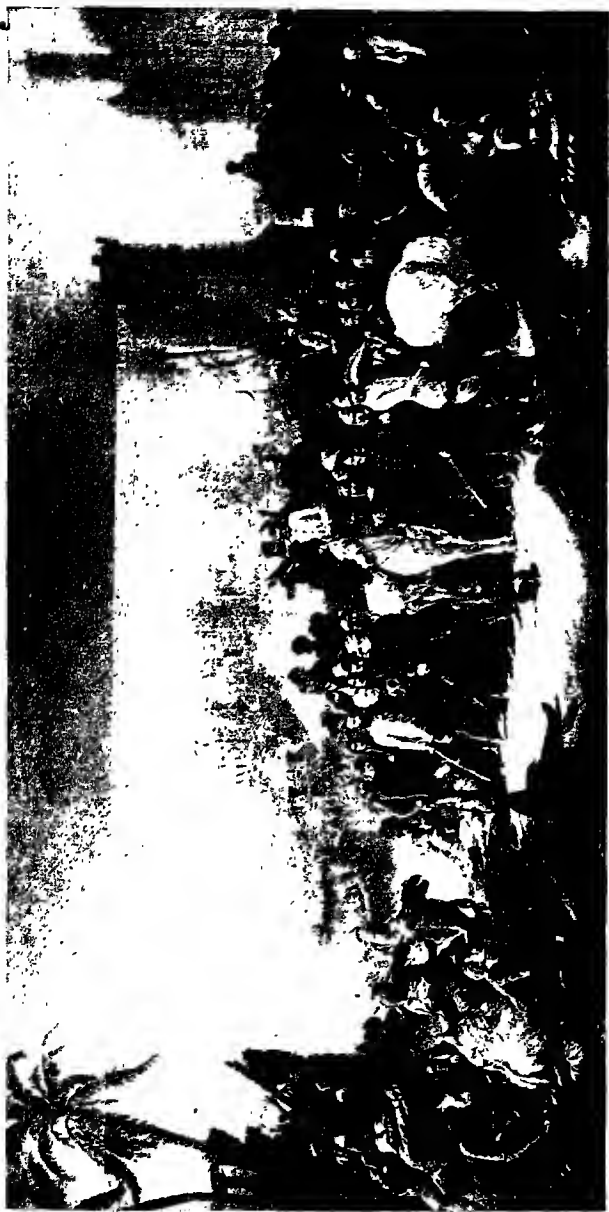
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THE GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP of Sir Charles Metcalfe was in the nature of a short interregnum, unimportant at any rate at the time : and Lord Auckland revived the conventional Proconsular policy. But before turning, with some relief, to the tale of renewed conquests, interspersed with disasters though they were, it is necessary to consider the changes wrought in the status of the Company by the Charter Act of 1833.

Public opinion had changed greatly even in the last 20 years. The end of the long Napoleonic wars had produced, as the aftermath of great wars always produces, much political agitation, sincere if often misguided. The Reform Bill of 1832 had altered the constitution of Parliament. The coming of steam had diminished distance. The attack on the Company's monopoly had grown in strength though it had veered in direction.

Lord Liverpool's Bill renewing the Charter in 1813 had to all intents and purposes taken away the Company's trading monopoly in India. But they still had a trading monopoly in China, for what it was worth. The Company knew, and their knowledge had been confirmed by the fiasco of Lord Macartney's mission, that it was limited to the tea





The Relief of Lucknow. The figures include Sir Henry Havelock, Sir James Outram, Sir Colin Campbell, Sir John Inglis, Sir Hope Grant, Sir William Peel, Sir R. Napier, and Sir W. R. Mansfield

*Engraved from a painting by T. J. Barker*

and opium trade. But Manchester, Sheffield and other great trading communities in England had other ideas. They tried to trade with China in linen, cloth, sword-blades, etc., and failing, owing to the intransigence of the Chinese, put their failure down, possibly sincerely, but certainly erroneously, to the Company's monopoly. They continued their agitation for the removal of the monopoly and in 1820 Committees of Parliament, set up to investigate means of extending the country's trade, advocated that a proportion of the Company's tonnage to China be allotted to the free use of the British public.

The Company retorted, again possibly sincerely, but certainly erroneously, that without the monopoly of the China trade, it could neither preserve its territories in India nor pay its dividends in England : and the Committee of the Commons, while pointing out "that they could not concur in all the apprehensions entertained by the Company of the consequences of even a partial relaxation of their Chinese monopoly," yet "acknowledged that it was of the utmost importance to their prosperity."

But this very minor victory was only postponing the inevitable. The free-traders were baffled, not beaten. They refused to believe that in so huge and (from all accounts) wealthy a country there was not room for all to trade, and continued their campaign. In 1827 a motion was brought forward in the House of Commons recommending the termination of the China monopoly. It was defeated, but only on the grounds that the time was fast approaching when the Charter would come up for renewal and that that time was the proper moment to consider the whole subject.

The writing on the wall : and fresh lines were added to it in the years that followed. In 1829 the Liverpool merchants petitioned for a removal of *all* restrictions of trade with India and China, which they contended were "humiliating to pride and good sense." Further Committees were set up, both in

the Lords and the Commons, and the most wishful thinking on the part of the Directors could hardly maintain that the reports were favourable to their monopoly, though they continued to put up desperate, and in the main sound, arguments in favour of it.

But just as the tide of compulsory conquest in India was running faster and faster, getting completely beyond the Company's control, so was the tide of anti-monopolistic agitation at home. In 1830 the Duke of Wellington, as Prime-Minister of William III's first Parliament, summoned the Chairman of the Court of Directors, William Astell, to a conference at which he told him with his usual bluntness that the Crown had decided to continue the Company in its Indian administration, but to deprive it of its commercial monopoly, to make it in fact an instrument of Government instead of a medium for trade : and Astell, bowing to the inevitable, agreed in principle, but ventured to point out that the China monopoly was necessary to cover the deficit which governing India entailed.

In the succession of short-lived governments that followed, the Company gained a reprieve, but the free-traders were not idle. A merchant of Liverpool, Thomas Langton, stated before the Parliamentary Committee that the Company's accounts were in such a shocking state of confusion that the Directors must have been "guilty of either ignorance or bad faith." The Company refuted these charges completely and with dignity, but they refused to petition for a renewal of the Charter, preferring no doubt wisely, to let their opponents continue to make out the best (or worst) case they could and to content themselves with answering that case. But they did ask, and not without reason, that the Government's views on the matter should be indicated to them at the earliest possible moment.

The request was complied with, all too quickly. Twenty-nine propositions, forming the basis of a Bill

renewing (or refusing to renew) the Charter, were submitted to the Court of Directors, by Earl Grey, the Prime Minister, and Mr. Grant, which may be summarised as follows: the Company were to surrender to the Crown all assets, commercial and territorial, for an annuity of £630,000 and to allow to any British subject the right to settle or trade in India; but, while ceasing to trade, they were to remain, in collaboration with the Board of Control, Governors of India for and on behalf of the Crown, the interest of the Proprietors being secured by collateral security in the shape of a sinking fund of £1,200,000. Those, said Earl Grey in effect, are the Ministry's terms; of course you can reject them if you like, but, if you do, you must be prepared to submit to a very searching inquiry which may end in your losing the little that the proposals leave you.

The Company did not reject the terms, but they did attempt to secure a compromise. They pointed out that they were being asked to surrender £21,000,000 worth of capital, the monopoly of the Chinese trade, their forts and factories, their claims to territory in India, which they contended, quite justly, Parliament had always allowed; they asked that at least the sinking fund should be raised to £2,000,000; and insisted that, whatever the Court of Directors might say, the Court of Proprietors must also be consulted.

This was agreed to, but the Court of Proprietors seemed to have lost their old fighting spirit, and, at a meeting which only one-quarter of their number bothered to attend, meekly approved the Ministerial plan, provided the sinking fund was indeed raised to £2,000,000.

The Ministry, who could afford to be generous, conceded this and, further, set at rest the fears which the Court of Directors had entertained lest their right to recall a Governor-General, if for instance he proved extravagant or inefficient, should be liable to be vetoed by the Government acting through the Board of Con-



trol ; and, having made these concessions, Mr. Grant in the Commons, Lord Lansdowne in the Lords, submitted the Bill to Parliament and explained the proposed changes.

The Directors still fought, and fought successfully, on one or two points of comparatively minor importance. They opposed, for instance, the formation of a fourth Presidency (in addition to Bengal, Madras and Bombay) as being unnecessarily expensive ; resisted the proposed reductions of the Councils of Bombay and Madras ; and complained (voicing a very sore subject) that the Bill "not only interfered with the control exercised by the home authorities, but invested the Governor-General with a sway almost absolute."

Then, having made their protests, they surrendered. The Bill became law in August, 1833.

The commercial Company, which had started 200 years before with the little *Susan* and now possessed great fleets and armies and controlled most of India ; which had increased its initial capital of £30,133 6s. 8d. to the astronomical figure of £21,000,000, not counting material possessions whose value could hardly be assessed in terms of money at all, ceased to exist—as a commercial Company.

But only as a commercial Company. Here is the strangest paradox in all "this strange eventful history." The Company had now indeed achieved that "Sovereign Estate" of which long-dead Chairmen and Directors had dreamed and beyond their most ambitious dreams : and in so doing had lost the very *raison d'être* of their existence, had ceased even to pretend to be a trading corporation, had become in very truth an instrument of government, or rather a formula of government. The whole thing was, in short, one of these legal fictions so queerly dear to the English mentality. The East India Company, the joint-stock corporation, had ceased to exist, the "Kumpani Bahadur," obeyed and revered by millions on millions of Indians who had not the

faintest idea what a joint-stock Company might be, had come to paramountcy, and behind that paramountcy was in fact the might of England, now rapidly becoming, if she had not already become, the greatest power on earth.

Yet there was method in this apparent and typically English madness. The Directors, in the long negotiations that preceded the Bill, had at one point suggested that it would be infinitely preferable for the Crown openly to assume the government of India instead of trying "to maintain an intermediate body which was deprived by the present measure of its authority, and rendered inefficient and converted into a mere useless charge upon the revenues of India." But they were wrong. The public was, then as now, almost incredibly indifferent to Indian affairs and the Crown was not yet ready to take over the government. Lord Macaulay summed up the position rather neatly in his speech in the House of Lords.

"Three things," he said, "I take as proved—that the Crown must have a certain authority over India, that there must be an efficient check on the authority of the Crown and that the House of Commons is not an efficient check. We must then find some other body to perform that important office. We have such a body—the Company: shall we discard it? . . . It is true that the power of the Company is an anomaly in politics. But what constitution can we give which shall not be strange—which shall not be anomalous? That Empire is itself the strangest of all political anomalies. It is the strangest of all Governments, but it is designed for the strangest of all Empires."

Anomalous it certainly was. Yet because of the anomaly the scheme was sound. Parliament, except when they were bullied into a show of interest by the complaints of free-traders or by an uneasy suspicion that this great, amorphous, anomalous body might trespass on their own precious privileges was noto-

riously uninterested in and ignorant of India, while the Directors, if their true knowledge of India was not encyclopædic, were at least interested. And the "*Kumpani Bahadur*" had an enormous prestige in India, where prestige counts for so much. Parliament did not want to govern India themselves, but they certainly did not want the Crown to govern India. Nobody could think of any other solution, though some tentative suggestions were put forward that the sceptre should pass to some body akin to the Board of Control ; so the Company remained the great overseer, the great landlord, the great tax-collector, and was so to remain for another 20 years with the proviso that, if at the end of that time they should for any reason be deprived of the political government, the Proprietors should have the option at three year's notice of being paid off at the rate of £100 for every £5 5s. of annuity, a capital sum which they could use for Indian trade or any other purpose they might think fit.

But here was the most curious anomaly in all the anomalous affair. Parliament, while with one hand, as it were, granting to the Company this tremendous political power, with the other hand took it away by greatly augmenting the power of the Governor-Generals, who were in all conscience powerful enough already, investing them with "a sway almost absolute," enabling them to make laws and regulations as they pleased, provided only that such laws in no way affected the prerogatives of the Crown and Parliament and the rights of the Company : which left them a pretty wide field, safeguarded only by the Company's power of recall.

The Governor-Generals became in fact, if not in theory, autocrats. It was not necessarily a bad thing, for an autocratic government is, and remains, for all the pseudo-democratic bleatings of Congress to-day, the only form of government which the Indian really understands and really likes ; and it became definitely a good thing because the line of great proconsuls did

not, in spite of the Bentinck interlude, end with Lord Amherst. They became kings in all but name, the incarnate embodiment of that great and shadowy power behind the throne (to Indian eyes), the *Kumpani Bahadur*.

## DISASTER AND DISMISSAL

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LORD AUCKLAND, an able, unassuming man with a tremendous capacity for hard work, desirous only of a continuation of a peace which would enable him to carry out his eminently practical and sensible schemes on the administration side,\* found himself plunged almost immediately into the most disastrous war that the English ever fought in India ; and, like Lord Amherst before him, against a new enemy beyond the frontiers.

Not only an Oriental enemy. 'A new European competitor turned, or appeared to be turning, envious eyes towards the glittering Empire of India.'

One of the most curious qualities of the Muse of History is her fondness for repetition. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Russians defeated, in alliance with England, a conqueror who had swept almost unchecked over practically every other nation in Europe. In the middle of the 20th century they meted out to Hitler the same treatment as they had meted out to Napoleon, again in alliance with England : and in each case these victories, splendid and courageous though they were, led the Russian autocrat to ambitions which were neither splendid nor courageous ; to a reversion to those very power politics which a weary Europe had fought long years to check.

The parallel can be illustrated almost indefinitely, but, as this book does not aim to be a recital of historical parallels, one further instance will suffice. As in the 1940's, so in the 1830's, Russia embarked on a career of imperialistic expansion, turned her eyes to Persia, a weak kingdom conveniently close to her own frontiers and dangerously close to the frontiers of India. Lord Palmerston, one of the greatest of Foreign Ministers, saw clearly and rightly interpreted this in 1830. His instructions to Lord Auckland must have run on some such lines as these: Russia is a menace and she has obviously got eyes on India. There must be a buffer state or states and those buffer states are Afghanistan and the Punjab. See that they don't fall under Russian influence.

It was all very sound sense, but unfortunately there were complications with which Lord Auckland, filled, as he expressed it at a farewell banquet, with "exaltation at the prospect of promoting education and knowledge in India, of improving the administration of justice, of extending the blessings of good government and happiness to millions of her people," was perhaps not quite the man to cope. "The throne of Afghanistan was passing through a period of instability unusual even for that unstable monarchy; and the throne of the Punjab was occupied by one of the shrewdest warrior-statesmen of Indian history, Ranjit Singh, the one-eyed, pock-marked, debauched, charming, unscrupulous and above all emphatically able "Lion of the Punjab," ruler of the Sikhs. "The Afghan king, on the other hand, Shah Shuja, while equally debauched, was a weak nonentity who, like all Oriental nonentities, soon lost his throne to a stronger claimant, Dost Mohammed." Shah Shuja fled to Ranjit Singh to seek assistance. He arrived with the Koh-i-Noor (looted from the Moghuls by his ancestor, Nadir Shah in 1738) and without an army. He left again with a large Sikh army and without the Koh-i-Noor, Ranjit Singh being, in addition to his other qualities, a good business-man. It was an expensive

army for the Afghan refugee, and it did him little or no good, for it was duly defeated by Dost Mohammed, while in its rear Ranjit Singh calmly annexed the richest Afghan province, Peshawar. Meanwhile the Governor-General, in accordance with Lord Palmerston's instructions, had been wooing Dost Mohammed through the medium of a very able envoy, Captain (afterwards Sir Alexander) Burns : with such success that the Afghan prince, after a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to reconquer Peshawar, decided to see what the friendship of England was worth and appealed to Lord Auckland for help in regaining his lost province.

But the Governor-General was not a good judge of character, he had the Russophobe Lord Palmerston behind him and, in front of him as tangible proof of the rightness of the Foreign Secretary's views, the fact that the Shah of Persia, egged on by the Russians, had attacked Herat, a little principality to the north-west, known as "the Gateway to Afghanistan," and would have taken it, save for the inspiration and leadership given to its defence by a young Englishman, who happened to be there on research work, Lieutenant Eldred Pottinger.

His Lordship, harried by dispatches from home, became panic-stricken and, as panic-stricken men so often do, he backed the wrong horse. He backed Shah Shuja and snubbed Dost Mohammed, far the better man of the two ; and Dost Mohammed, not unnaturally, turned to Russia. Lord Auckland became yet more frightened, the dispatches from home became more insistent : in 1838 he made an alliance with Ranjit Singh, who would have cheerfully allied with the Devil himself if he saw any profit in it, and sent an invading army into Afghanistan.

The affair, though badly mismanaged, began with a little transient success. Dost Mohammed was defeated and sent a prisoner to Calcutta, where he made himself universally popular and whiled away a not unpleasant captivity playing chess with a sympathetic

English lady. Kandahar was entered, Ghazni stormed and Shah Shuja replaced on the throne amid the universal execrations of his loving subjects.

But it is one thing to replace an unpopular monarch, quite another thing to keep him there. To the horror of the Directors at home, who looked on an Army of Occupation as a needless expense, and the dismay of Lord Auckland, who saw all his benevolent ambitions nullified by this endless and useless war, it was found necessary to keep an English force of 15,000 men in Kabul. At first peacefully enough, although the Sikh allies had discreetly vanished, a very obvious pointer to future events if anyone had had enough sense to see it.

'No one had enough sense. The English officers, with that self-confident optimism which is the hallmark of the finest and most foolish race on earth, imported their wives and families.' Sir William Macnaghten, "Envoy and Minister at the Court of Shah Shuja," and Sir Alexander Burns, who ought to have known better, dined frequently at Bala Hissar, the royal palace : the Afghan nobles brought presents to their conqueror, who innocently and gratefully accepted them.

Then the storm broke. A local insurrection flared up in Kabul, Sir Alexander Burns was treacherously murdered, suppression was fumbled by Macnaghten and General Elphinstone, who was practically in his dotage, and the local insurrection swelled quickly to a national uprising led by Dost Mohammed's son, Akbar Khan, a young man with much of the ability and none of the chivalry of his father. Macnaghten was murdered, equally treacherously, and a kind of paralysis fell on the English. Instead of trying to fight their way out they agreed to evacuate the country, trusting to the word of Akbar Khan : the Afghan has many excellent qualities, but his best friend could not call him allergic to treachery. The retreat began on January 6th, 1842, 4,500 fighting men and 11,000 camp followers, including the women and children



who had come, with such misguided enthusiasm, to be with their husbands and fathers, set out through the deep snow and piercing cold of an Afghan winter on the long tragic march to India, which they were never to see again. The safe-conduct never materialised, the escort never appeared, Akbar Khan made no attempt to keep any of his lavish promises. The women were tricked back to Kabul and vanished from human ken, the men died of exposure or were ambushed and butchered in ghastly defiles, the Khurd Kabul Pass, the Jagdalak Pass; were sniped by hidden marksmen and ridden down by elusive horsemen. Of all the 15,500 who had started out from Kabul, one man and one man only, Dr. Brydon, tottered into the horrified English-held fort of Jallalabad, on January 13, 1842, an exhausted man on an exhausted horse, the sole survivor of an army. There have been few more comprehensive massacres in history.

It was the end of the first Afghan war, it was also the end of Lord Auckland. Apart from this disastrous affair, he had done good, notably in judicial reform, and had contemplated the great irrigation schemes which, carried out by his successors, have been of such benefit to India. But the shock of the retreat from Kabul was too much for him. A grief-stricken and humiliated man, he resigned his post and no one sought to dissuade him. He had the makings of a proconsul, might with a little luck have been a successful one, but he was just not big enough for the task.

He was succeeded by Lord Ellenborough : a man of very different mettle, who was if anything too big for the task or at least, in the opinion of many, too big for his boots. He agreed with the Directors at home that king-making in Afghanistan was not a paying proposition and must be abandoned, but he was determined to teach the Afghans a lesson first : and he did, in a campaign which was as successful as its predecessor had been disastrous. The armies of

PENIS ON THE LONDON CHARIOT - August 22, 1857.



A cartoon by Tenniel from *Punch*, 22nd August 1857.

Akbar Khan were defeated, Kabul was reoccupied and Dost Mohammed replaced on the throne, remarking before he left Calcutta that he could not understand "why the rulers of so vast and flourishing an Empire should have gone across the Indus to deprive me of my poor and barren country."

It puzzled a good many people, and Lord Ellenborough at any rate did not make a similar mistake. Having taught the Afghans their lesson, he withdrew his armies from the country altogether, issuing what the Duke of Wellington, who knew something of Indian warfare, ironically described as his "Song of Triumph." "Disasters," ran one clause, "unparalleled in their extent, unless by the errors in which they originated and by the treachery by which they were completed, have in one short campaign been avenged upon every scene of past misfortune: and repeated victories in the field have again attached the opinion of invincibility to the British rule."

But that unfortunately was just what they had not done. For the first time in history, an English army had been not only defeated but annihilated. No subsequent victories could alter that, and what had been done once could be done again. The story—and its implications—spread through Northern India; it was bruited abroad in bazaars and discussed in cantonments. It is not too much to say that Lord Auckland's disastrous Afghan experiment was one of the first underlying causes of the Indian Mutiny. But that cataclysm was still twenty years away, twenty years of practically unbroken success. Ellenborough had an unfortunate predilection for pompous proclamations: a far more notorious one, issued shortly after that quoted above, began with the words, "Our victorious army bears the gate of the temple of Somnath in triumph from Afghanistan and the despoiled tomb of Sultan Mohammed looks upon the ruins of Ghazni. The result of 800 years is at last avenged": and was severely criticised by all Lord Ellenborough's enemies (who were numerous)

on the grounds that the proclamation was a sign that, the Governor-General was showing a preference for the Hindus as against the Moslems, which was contrary to the whole policy of England—though it is extremely unlikely that Ellenborough had any such intentions, and in point of fact it was eventually discovered that they were not the gates of Somnath at all.

But, for all this tendency to verbosity, he was a worthy successor to Cornwallis and Wellesley and Amherst. He might talk nonsense, but he stood none. The Sind business was characteristic. This, the most westerly country of the Indian sub-continent, had at various times in its chequered history been, at least in theory, a dependency of Persia, of the Moghuls and of Afghanistan. In fact, it had always been practically, and by the beginning of the 20th century entirely, independent, though this independence was only preserved from the rapacious clutches of Ranjit Singh by Lord William Bentinck. The outbreak of the Afghan war rather altered the position. The English for the first time crossed the Indus, Sind was astride their line of communications and the Amirs (four in number according to long tradition) were forced to sign a treaty, ceding the port of Karachi and allowing free navigation on the Indus. It was not a harsh or an unjust treaty and at least it protected them from Ranjit Singh ; but the Kabul disaster had its effect. The Amirs and the wild Baluchi tribesmen, who made up at any rate the fighting part of the population, saw, or thought they saw, in the English defeat the chance of throwing off the English yoke, light though it might be.

Lord Ellenborough did not agree with them or with the Resident, James Outram, who reported that the "changeable, puerile and divided chieftains were in no way dangerous." He saw with something of Wellesley's cold common-sense that, if the Company did not annex Sind, either Akbar Khan, flushed with triumph, or Ranjit Singh undoubtedly would ; ~~that~~

its continuance as an independent state constituted a weak spot on that North-West frontier which for a century to come was to be the chief anxiety of the Government of India, Crown or Company ; and that the Indus was a waterway of immense importance, both banks of which must, for their own safety's sake, be controlled by the Company. He sent Sir Charles Napier to relieve Outram, who was sent to Hyderabad,\* giving him a very broad hint that the sooner an excuse was found for taking over the country the better.

The Amirs themselves produced the excuse. They assembled an army of 25,000 men, the mere threat of which would, they felt, bring the English to their senses. But they were unlucky in having to deal with an opponent of exceptional brilliance. Sir Charles Napier had learned his soldiering in the hard school of the Peninsula and, like his great master Wellington, he believed in striking first. Without waiting for negotiations, or for attacks, he made an extraordinary forced march across the desert of Baluchistan to take by surprise the fortress of Emaun-Ghaur, the rallying point of the Baluchi warriors, which up to that date no white man had ever seen : returned to Hyderabad, where the Baluchis had celebrated the signing of a treaty with the Company by immediately, the very next day, attacking Outram's little force : relieved it and thoroughly defeated the Amirs at the battle of Miani, 2,000 men against 22,000, and sent to the Governor-General the shortest, neatest and completest of telegrams, "Peccavi."

Sind was annexed : under Napier's governance it knew order, peace and prosperity, so that, if the annexation were high-handed and immoral, as some historians like to think, it did at least do good to all concerned : if it was a "piece of rascality," it was at least in Napier's own words, "a very advantageous,

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\* Hyderabad in this chapter refers, of course, to Hyderabad, Sind, not Hydërabad, Deccan.

useful and humane piece of rascality," and it is significant of the change in the Company's status that, in his initial proclamation to the inhabitants, Sir Charles Napier announced that their chiefs "had been conquered by the British nation." The British nation, be it noted, not the Honourable East India Company.

Then there was the Gwalior affair. It will be remembered that in the days of the second Mahratta war the state of Gwalior, ruled by a semi-idiot, had held aloof and been taken under the Company's protection. Under that protection, Gwalior remained serene and tranquil for nearly half a century while most of the rest of India seethed and bubbled about it.

But gratitude is not a conspicuous virtue among Indians and, if the mad Maharajah was content with serenity, his subjects were not. Again the Afghan war had its repercussions: the English had been defeated by the Afghans, mere mongrel Moslem dogs, they could be defeated again by warlike Hindus, the martial Mahrattas. The mad Maharajah died, his successor was an infant, a regent was appointed by the Governor-General. The Mahrattas rose, expelled the regent, insulted the Company's Resident. But Lord Ellenborough, as has been previously remarked, stood no nonsense. He had given Gwalior a Regent, whom he considered fitted for the post, and that Regent Gwalior was going to have whether it liked it or not. He sent Sir Hugh Gough with 14,000 men hopelessly outnumbered as usual but sufficiently numerous to defeat the Mahrattas at Maharajpore on the same day as another English army under General Grey defeated them at Punniar: and that was the end of the Mahratta menace, which had for more than a century dominated the political scene in India. The tide of compulsory conquest was rolling on.

It must not, however, be supposed that Lord Ellenborough's policy was entirely a policy of aggression, however much provoked. He believed sincerely that English rule was the best thing for Indian states.

• But he also believed, as a sort of inevitable corollary, that that rule must be alert and watchful, ready to introduce reform where reform was needed.

One direction in which reform was urgently needed was the police force and in perhaps no country (or rather collection of countries) in the world is an efficient and incorruptible police force so vitally necessary as in India. In the India of the Moghuls, as in the England of the Anglo-Saxons, the police force was on the basis of land tenure. The Zemindar, the local landowner, like the Thane, was responsible for producing the offender or paying damages if he failed to produce him ; and in the villages the watchmen, in a manner analogous to the Anglo-Saxon "hue and cry," could summon all men to help him to apprehend the evil-doer. It is a system which has various merits, but one grave flaw : it depends far too much on the power of the central government. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes ?* Or, in other words, if there is no one to keep the landowner in order, what order will the landowner keep ? The answer in the days of the decline of the Moghul power was "none" : and in any case in civil war "the policeman's lot is not a happy one."

Earlier Governor-Generals had experimented, not very energetically, with the idea of a paid, regular police force. Lord Ellenborough, basing his plans on the semi-military police organised by Sir Charles Napier in Sind, added a deputy-magistrate of any caste or creed to each district, where formerly one magistrate was considered sufficient for a million people ; and materially increased the pay and allowances of the native police officers, whose salary up to that time had been barely sufficient to cover their travelling expenses—with obvious results. He founded in fact the Indian Police, that magnificent body of men who, during the present century, have behaved with a rare combination of discretion and valour through many crises.

He also, by a law passed in 1843, abolished slavery

throughout India, though it is doubtful whether this suppression of a characteristic Oriental structure of society was really as wise and benevolent as it sounded. He also forbade State lotteries; and, thirty years ahead of his time, he tried to persuade Queen Victoria to become Empress of India with her image and superscription on the coinage.

These reforms, except perhaps the last, should undoubtedly have pleased the Directors. Perhaps they did, but their pleasure was forgotten in their dislike of Lord Ellenborough's military policy. The English are a curious people: nothing is too good for their armies in time of war, nothing is too bad for them in time of peace. And Lord Ellenborough, at a time when England, if not India, was at peace, made the (to him) fatal mistake of favouring the army before the Civil Service.

Further, in his general contempt of the civilian as against the soldier, he adopted a lofty attitude towards the Court of Directors. He had been Secretary of the Board of Control and therefore, technically, their superior; now that he was Governor-General, and therefore, technically, their servant, he never forgot it or let them forget it.

Perhaps, too, the Directors had the common human failing of wishing to exercise what power they still retained. In almost everything concerned with the Government of India they were subject to the Board of Control, but in one thing, and perhaps the most important thing, they still had the right which had been confirmed by the Charter Act of 1833. They could still recall the Governor-General. So they recalled Lord Ellenborough.

Queen Victoria was not amused, the Duke of Wellington was definitely annoyed, Sir Robert Peel waxed sarcastic at the Company's expense. The Directors remained unshaken. It might be, in point of fact it was, the last strong action that body was to take, but they took it and, constitutionally, no one could question their right to do so. Lord Ellen-



borough, that proud and brilliant man, was on July 15th, 1844, dismissed from his post like an errant bank-clerk, a victim, not so much of the gratitude of England like Clive and Warren Hastings, as of that curious anomaly which the Charter Act had introduced into the governance of India. And the Directors, having successfully dismissed him for being too militaristic, promptly appointed another successful soldier in his place who could confidently be relied on to carry out the same policy. They were not above indulging in anomalies themselves.

## THE FINAL CONQUESTS

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SIR HENRY HARDINGE (or Lord Hardinge as he afterwards became) was, like Sir Charles Napier, a veteran of the Peninsular War with a distinguished record ; a soldier before all things. He informed the officials on his arrival that he knew nothing of civil administration (which was slightly exaggerated as he had been Secretary for Ireland) and less of India ; but he added grimly that they would be extremely unwise if they trusted to that ignorance and tried to mislead him.

They did not try to mislead him and the Hardinge administration, quite apart from the Sikh war by which it is mostly remembered, is marked by some excellent and peaceful measures. He carried out the canal schemes mooted by Lord Auckland, schemes which were eventually to lead to India having the largest system of irrigation in the world, 40,000,000 acres made fertile by 6,700 miles of waterways. He commenced the railroad surveys (actual construction was begun by his successor) which ultimately were to give India 42,000 miles of permanent way. He induced the Princes to abolish *Sati* and slavery in their dominions. He reintroduced flogging as an army punishment and, if this measure sounds harsh to modern ears, at least it did away with the shocking anomaly by which a British soldier could be flogged.

while an Indian soldier could not ; and it is pleasant to record that the mere threat was enough, the punishment being very, very rarely administered. He advised the conclusion of a treaty with Denmark, by which, for £125,000, the Danes ceded their possessions in India, thus removing one more of the Company's old European rivals ; and with the Sultan of Borneo who handed over Labuan, thus strengthening the Company's hold on the East Indies.

Finally he enlarged on Lord William Bentinck's educational " reforms " by founding three Universities, Calcutta (to-day the largest in the world), Madras and Bombay, holding out prospects of office and promotion to successful students. A policy admirable in its intentions that was to prove in the long run disastrous in its results. But Lord Hardinge was only human ; he could hardly be expected to foresee the fatal consequences of foisting European education on Orientals, the mob of students, " plucked B.A.'s " and the like, mentally dyspeptic with half-digested knowledge, rendered unfit for and impatient of their national life as cultivators, avid only for some well-paid, secure, not too hard-worked, government post, and turning when the supply of such posts proved insufficient for the demand to agitation, who subsequently became the curse of Indian politics.

At least such measures, idealistic rather than practical though they might be, tend to show that Lord Hardinge was not merely a mercenary and aggressive conqueror. None of the proconsuls were ; but on him as on them war was forced.

The long series of compulsory conquests achieved by his predecessors had left the East India Company supreme, directly or indirectly, throughout the length and breadth of India—with one great exception, the Sikhs, the last independent nation left in the peninsula. As in the case of the Hindus and the Moslems, as always in that creed-ridden sub-continent, " Sikh " denotes a religion not a race ; a religion founded by one, Nanak Chand, the first *Guru* or teacher, back in

the days of the Emperor Baber. Like Buddhism, Sikhism was a revolt against the complexities and indecencies of the Hindu religion, was opposed to caste and bitterly contemptuous of idolatry, but, unlike Buddhism which is essentially a religion of peace and love, it soon became, under the pressure of events, a warrior creed ; a religion of the sword. It had no option for the *Gurus* and their followers were ferociously persecuted by the Great Moghuls : and persecution, as always, only strengthened and consolidated them. They survived in the zenith of the Moghul power, they flourished in its decline and they came to their climacteric at the beginning of the 19th century under that hard-headed, hideous and highly attractive ruler, Ranjit Singh, who united into one powerful military confederacy the various petty states of the Punjab, the various quarrelling sects into which, as is the manner of religions, the simple straight-forward creed of Nanak Chand had split. Ranjit Singh had as material some of the finest fighting men in India and he moulded this material into a magnificent fighting force 50,000 strong, drilled and trained by European adventurers such as Avitabile, supplemented by a kind of territorial army, 60,000 strong. But he was far too shrewd to use this weapon against the English, for whose martial prowess he had the greatest respect, even after the disastrous Afghan war ; though as we have seen he had taken that opportunity quietly to annex Peshawar. On the contrary he remained faithful to his alliance and, had he lived, the Sikh wars would probably never have taken place. But a diet almost exclusively composed of strong drink and aphrodisiacs will in the end undermine the strongest constitution ; Ranjit Singh died in 1839 and, once the cement of his masterful personality was removed, the apparently solid fabric of the Punjab began to crumble. It cannot be too often reiterated and emphasised that successful rule in India is always a question of personality, not of ideological theories, however attractive.

• The usual intrigues, civil war and palace revolution followed : from which eventually emerged a young lady of great energy and common-sense, the favourite concubine of the dead Maharajah. She showed her common-sense by refusing to commit *Sati* with 14 other assorted spouses ; her energy by getting her seven-year-old son Dhuleep Singh (who may or may not have been fathered by Ranjit Singh) proclaimed Rajah with herself as Regent. But her ability was not equal to her ambition. She reckoned without the Sikh army which had only two uses for women ; Queenship not being one of them. As the English were to find some 20 years later, the one thing one must never do in the East is to train a great army and then omit to use it. It always leads to trouble and it led to trouble now. The Sikh army got completely out of hand, expelled its European officers in 1841 and, four years later, crossed the Sutlej to attack the British force which Lord Ellenborough, in view of the turmoil in the Punjab, had wisely stationed on the frontier. The attack was certainly not unexpected, it is possible that it was not undeserved : none the less of all wars that the English fought in India the first Sikh war was that for which they were least responsible. It was an act of inexcusable aggression and, to do them justice, the Sikhs made no attempt to excuse it. They were inspired partly by the Kabul disaster—what Moslem dogs had done, could not the Khalsa, the Holy Brotherhood, do even better ?—partly by the annexation of Sind—might it not be their turn next ?—but, above all, by the plain straightforward wish to fight. Their wishes were granted, they had their fill of fighting of the plain, hard-hitting, cut-and-thrust variety ; Mudki (December 18th, 1845), the “ soldiers’ battle ” ; Ferozeshah (December 21st), when “ the fate of India trembled in the balance ” ; Aliwal (January 28th), where the Sikh bands played “ God save the Queen,” whether in derision or admiration has never been made clear ; and Sobraon, where the complete anni-

hilation of the Sikh army ended this short and bloody campaign.

The Sikhs were not beaten to their knees, the way to annexation was open. But the English genius for losing a peace robbed England of the fruits of victory. The Directors would not hear of annexation. Far too much money, they asserted, had been spent on the war ; they could not possibly afford to administer the whole of the Punjab. They contented themselves with annexing the lands south of the Sutlej and Kashmir, which was made into a separate subsidiary state ; with reducing the Sikh army to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry ; with recognising the Maharajah's right to manage his own internal affairs : and, immediately in the time-honoured English fashion, reduced their own armies by 50,000 men.

The first Sikh war was, in short, one of the many wars that were to end all wars—at least in India ; and even Lord Hardinge agreed to this optimistic estimate, publicly stating on his retirement that “ it would not be necessary to fire another shot in India for seven years.”

His successor, Lord Dalhousie, sincerely hoped that he was right. In fact it was becoming a commonplace for new Governor-Generals to look forward to an era of perfect peace : and to be rudely disappointed. The Punjab was not crushed, the Sikh armies that survived were still full of fight, the Maharani still inclined to intrigue. In October, 1848, a bare eight months after his arrival in India, Dalhousie was forced to announce, “ I have wished for peace, I have striven for it. (How many Governor-Generals have said the same ?) But, unwarned by precedent, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war and on my word, Sir, they shall have it with a vengeance ” : and wrote to the Directors in London, “ There is no course open to us but to prepare for a general Sikh war and ultimately occupy the country.”

They had certainly called for it, having murdered the English Resident in April and resorted to open

war at Multan in September : they were certainly to have it with a vengeance. The second Sikh war, though shorter, was as hard-hitting, as desperate and as sanguinary as the first, beginning with Chillian-walah, which was almost a defeat and led to the recall of Sir Hugh Gough, and ending on February 21st, before the recall became operative, with Gujerat, which was a complete and crushing victory.

Then, having expended a lot more money and a lot more lives, the Directors agreed to do what they should have done in the first instance and annexed the Punjab, setting up a Board of Government under the Lawrences and removing the Maharajah with the usual generous pension. They also annexed the Koh-i-Noor, sending that brilliant and blood-bespattered gem to England where it remains to this day in the Queen's crown of the Regalia of England, as it was popularly supposed to be unlucky to men.

— But it was to have one last ridiculous adventure before leaving India for ever. On its surrender it was handed to Lawrence, the Commissioner, a man not interested in precious stones, who gave it one careless glance and thrust it into the pocket of his white linen suit. Busy with other matters he forgot all about it and that night handed over the suit to the *dhobi* (washerman) : only to remember two days later that he had never taken the Koh-i-Noor out of his pocket. In great anxiety he summoned the *dhobi*.

"That suit I sent to the wash—was there anything in the pockets?"

"Nothing, Sahib, save a worthless bit of glass. But in case it was something your Honour needed, I have kept it." And from some fold of his garments he produced, with a complacent smile, a million pounds' worth of diamond wrapped up in a dirty rag.

— The folly of non-annexation had been abundantly proved within the frontiers of India : it was not to be proved beyond the frontiers. The Burmese had been taught a sharp lesson in 1825, but they soon forgot it. To their Oriental way of thinking, conquerors who

content themselves with a province or two and then retire need not be taken very seriously. Besides, these conquerors were not, as they had once seemed, unconquerable—remember Kabul!—and must be exhausted by the Sikh wars. The King of Ava, Pagan Min, became more and more oppressive to his own subjects, more and more extortionate towards the English merchants in Rangoon and elsewhere, more and more contemptuous in his rejection of attempts at conciliation. Eventually he went too far. British ships were fired on, Commodore Lambert, that “too combustible” sailor, lost his temper, and Lord Dalhousie lost his long patience, issuing an ultimatum expiring on April 1st, 1852. It was again ignored, and the Governor-General reluctantly sent an amphibious expedition under General Godwin and Admiral Austen, brother of more famous Jane.

But his reluctance did not prevent him from seeing that the expedition was extremely well-organised and well-conducted. The second Burmese war, in sharp contrast to the Sikh wars, was in the nature of a combined operation picnic. The army captured Rangoon and Bessein, the navy sailed up river as far as Prome; Pagan Min proved himself far better at windy menaces than at military strategy; the Burmese troops, with a few exceptions, ran away, and with the capture of the town of Pegu the war came to an inglorious (for the Burmese) end; the province of Pegu being annexed “in compensation for the past and better security for the future (November 20th, 1856).

It seemed as if at long last the wars and conquests of the Company were at end. The mercantile venture which had commenced with a hard-held foothold at Surat was now lord of the East from Cape Comorin to the Khyber Pass, from the Indus to the Irrawaddy: its once powerful European rivals were reduced to a few tiny possessions, Goa, Chander-nagore, Pondicherry: the martial races who had opposed it were serving in its armies: it had sought



for trade and gained an Empire, which, as Alison the historian magnificently puts it, "embraced a greater number of inhabitants than that conquered in five centuries by the Roman legions, double the number subjugated by the Russian armies in two centuries and more than triple those won for France by the energy of the Revolution and the victories of Napoleon. And this mighty Empire, transcending any which has existed since the world began, had been acquired in one century \* by a pacific company, having its chief place of business 14,000 miles distant from the theatre of its conquests—which has almost always been guided by pacific interests and rarely engaged in wars, except from necessity and in self-defence—which began its career with 500 European soldiers, and seldom has so many as 50,000 collected around its standards ! The history of the world may be searched in vain for a parallel to such prodigy."

Prodigy indeed ! For certainly, since the first cave-man bartered the first flint axe-head, no commercial venture has ever had, or ever can have by any conceivable concatenation of circumstances in the future, so astounding and bewildering a success. In 1853 the East India Company was at the very zenith of its power. If it had lost monopoly, it had gained sovereignty ; if it had lost trade, it had gained territory greater than the territories of the Crown to which it owed allegiance, it appeared to be as secure and irremovable as the Himalayas themselves. Yet in less than a decade it was to pass for ever from the pages of history.

\* He is reckoning from the battle of Plassey ; the real beginning of the Company's territorial expansion.

## THE GATHERING OF THE STORM

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**B**OTH IN ENGLAND AND in India the seeds of this sudden decay were already planted, or being planted : already, both in England and in India, the clouds were gathering, though no man marked them, the portents of the storm that was to sweep the Company into sudden and dramatic extinction.

In England in 1853 the Charter once more came up for renewal, and the terms of renewal dealt a serious blow to the power of the Directors, as against the power of the Board of Control. Their numbers were reduced to eighteen, twelve chosen as heretofore by the Proprietors and six (who, wisely if belatedly, must have spent at least ten years in India) were directly appointed by the Crown. The Charter was renewed, not for twenty years but, "until Parliament should otherwise direct," a phrase which must have rung ominously in the ears of the Directors ; and, finally, the right of civil patronage was taken away from them, the College of Fort William was abolished, Haileybury was given notice of abolition though actually it survived as a public school, and the Indian Civil Service was thrown open to competitive examination.

There are many arguments in favour of thus

removing the choice of administrators from a commercial Directorate : there is no argument, save a semi-socialist one, in favour of substituting the examination-*wallah* for the hand-picked man of earlier days, and in the end the substitution was to prove disastrous. The Committee which advocated this extraordinary measure was presided over by Lord Macaulay, and only a man with his mis-directed mania for education could possibly have persuaded himself—and others—that the ability to pass a difficult examination in various abstruse and erudite subjects presupposes the ability to handle men ; in fact it very often works in exactly the opposite way. Further, one of the few certain things in an uncertain world is that the average Indian is a snob in the best sense of that much-abused word. He does not mind, in fact he rather likes, being governed, but it must be by gentlemen ; and he has an extraordinary flair for detecting those who, to use an expressive slang phrase, are “not quite out of the top-drawer.” For some obscure reason the phrase “*Pakka \* Sahib*,” which means so much to the Indians, has in England become a term of derision (especially among those who can never hope to attain that status), almost a term of abuse : yet the *Pakka Sahibs* won and held India.

But this particular measure, even if it was to lead to the ultimate dissolution of the Indian Empire, had no effect on the immediate dissolution of the Company, which, as the *Times* leading article was to put it 20 years later, “owing to the inherent difficulties of abolishing it, might have subsisted to this day.” The Charter of 1853 weakened the sovereignty in government of the Directors as previous Charter Acts had lessened and finally extinguished their monopoly in commerce, but it was events in India that brewed the storm which was to destroy both sovereignty and

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\* *Pakka* : a difficult word to translate exactly, really connotes “genuine, unquestionable.”

commerce. One of these events had already taken place : the disaster of the first Afghan war, which shook the belief in English invincibility held by the Indians and especially by fighting Indians.

The second Afghan war and the two Sikh wars had done something to re-establish that belief, but only among the Afghans and the Sikhs : it is worth noticing that it was those races which had most recently felt the sharpness of the English sword, the Gurkhas, the Afghans and the Sikhs, who were to remain steadfast through the tempest of the Mutiny. The others had forgotten just how fine a fighting man the Englishman could be, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that, having been trained by the English (and the excellence of the training they quite openly admitted), they now considered themselves the equals of the English.

The Indian troops of the Company had in fact come to an exaggerated idea of their own importance. They had formed the majority, in most cases the vast majority, of every army that the Company had put into the field in every war, and they argued therefore that it was they, the sepoys, who had won these wars ; forgetting or failing to realise that they owed this excellence not only to English training, but also in the field to the stiffening of British troops and the leadership of British officers. The men of every company and squadron, often the men of a whole regiment, were bound to each other by ties of family and caste and creed, they had their own officers, they were, or felt they were, self-contained and self-sufficient even without their British officers, many of whom, owing to the incredible length of time they were allowed to go on serving, had lost their energy and initiative ; they also had guns and gunners, the mistake which Clive avoided having been made by his successors ; and above all, owing to short-sighted economy on the part of the Directors, they far outnumbered the British troops, the figures at the beginning of the fatal year 1857 being 223,000

Indian and 39,000 British, of whom 15,000 were in the service of the Company.

To all these, in a sense, intangible series of disaffection was added in 1856 a very real and tangible one: the annexation of Oudh. So far as their relations with the Company were concerned the Rajahs of Oudh had been reasonably loyal to the treaty of 1801, by which they had entered Lord Wellesley's Subsidiary System: they had never actively opposed, they had sometimes even helped, the English. But in their relations with their own unfortunate subjects, they had broken every law of God and man. The government of Lucknow, the government of the favourites, "the fiddlers and eunuchs, the knaves who surround and govern the king," as the Resident scornfully described them, was scandalously oppressive and the wretched inhabitants were bullied, tortured, starved and fleeced in a manner which reflected badly on the Company's administration as a whole. But—under their treaties the Subsidiary Princes had always retained the right to manage (or more usually to mismanage) their own domestic affairs, the Governor-General therefore maintained that, as the rulers of Oudh, however badly they might govern, had been consistently loyal to the Company, annexation was out of the question, though he advocated more control; without, however, appropriating the revenues or entirely removing all native officials; and Sleeman and Lawrence and others who knew their India agreed with him.

But the Directors would not listen. They had acquired a taste for conquest, their mouths watered at the thought of the rich revenues of this Mohammedan state, and they were always glad of an opportunity of enforcing a certain line of policy on the Governor-Generals who were, in their view, all too fond of inaugurating policies on their own and carrying them through before the Court of Directors had a chance to protest. They ordered the annexation of Oudh and the annexation took place, another 25,000

square miles, another five million people, came under the direct rule of the Company without a shot being fired.

It was a dangerous and mistaken policy and the very peacefulness with which it took place made it all the more dangerous. For, in spite of Dalhousie's representations, no action was taken to disarm the annexed province, and the Company, in the usual extraordinary English fashion, garrisoned it with one British regiment and one battery. But the peacefulness was deceptive, the annexation created a very bad impression on the curious Oriental mind. The Indians admitted that the King of Oudh had been a scandalous caricature of a ruler, that the Company had, as usual, been generous enough as to his pension, that the inhabitants were now likely to be considerably better governed than they had ever been before. But, they asked in effect, if this is the way in which the *Kumpani Bahadur* treats an ally who, whatever his internal misdeeds, has always been loyal externally, merely in order to gain more territory and more revenue, who is safe from their rapacity? And nowhere did it create a worse impression than on the Bengal army, many of whom were recruited from this very province. It crystallised vague discontents, it was one of the direct causes of the Mutiny, and, though the most important instance, it was not an isolated instance. Lord Dalhousie carried on, he did not, as is generally supposed, initiate what was known as the Doctrine of Lapse. If the native ruler of a Subsidiary State died without leaving a son of his body, his state was considered to lapse to the Company, adopted sons not being recognised as heirs although by Hindu law and religion an adopted son's right to inherit is as binding as that of a natural son. Lord Dalhousie meted out this admittedly high-handed treatment to five separate states, Satara, Jhansi, Jaitpore, Nagpore and Sambalpore and the Directors expressed their full approval. He did so with the best possible motives. He held, and held

most sincerely, the proconsular belief that rulers only exist for the good of the ruled, which must be bestowed on them regardless of their wishes in the matter and certainly regardless of such inconvenient trifles as the Hindu law of adoption ; he was convinced beyond possible shadow of doubt that British rule was good for the ruled, far better than the rule of Indian Princes, so that any excuse was permissible for effecting the exchange. It is at least arguable that his theory is correct.

“ For forms of Government let fools contest :

Whate’er is best administered is best.”

But the Indians, at any rate, did not think so, and the “ lapse ” of these five states aroused the wrath of the Hindus, just as the annexation of Oudh aroused the wrath of the Mohammedans.

Dalhousie was one of the greatest of proconsuls, a young man—he was only 44 when he resigned his post owing to ill-health—of extraordinary will-power, which overcame ever-present bodily weakness, and a passionate desire to serve India as he felt she should be served and to push through reforms to that end. Yet almost every one of his reforms led to increasing discontent. (Reforms so often do : indeed, quite a good case could be made out for the iconoclastic theory that most of the trouble in this much-troubled world is caused by reforms.) He built railways and telegraph lines, and the Indians believed that these blessings of civilisation were the inventions of the devil. He introduced a uniform rate of postage—half an anna to anywhere in India—and the conspirators, whose correspondence was increasing, found it a very welcome saving of money. He drew up a scheme for the development of education from the primary school to the university on the lines laid down in the despatch sent out by Sir Charles Wood (afterwards Lord Halifax), and the Moslems took the insistence on the learning of the English as a direct insult to themselves.

In short, all unwittingly and with the best possible

intentions, Lord Dalhousie's administration, able as it was, admirable as it was in many ways, paved the way to the Mutiny. It was not his fault. As Lord Roberts—and few men knew their India both during and after the Mutiny so well—wrote later, “Discontent and dissatisfaction were produced by a policy which, in many instances, the rulers of India were powerless to avoid or postpone, forced upon them as it was by the demands of civilisation and the necessity for a more enlightened legislation.”



## THE BREAKING OF THE STORM

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**B**UT ALL THIS, the arrogance of the Sepoys, the unrest in Oudh, the resentment of the dispossessed Hindu Princes, the jealousy of the Moslems, the fears of the peasantry, all this discontent, widespread and simmering though it was, might well have dissolved harmlessly had it not been directed by a brain and crystallised by a slogan.

The identity of the brain behind the Mutiny has never been disclosed ; the most popular theory being that the Moslems of Northern India, eager to restore the glories of the Moghul Empire and using the Persian Court as the focal point of their conspiracy, persuaded the Hindus to join them in rising against the English by telling them that they were to be forcibly converted to Christianity. But this theory seems to the writer both historically and psychologically incorrect. The propaganda of the Mutiny, the revived or invented prophecy that English rule would end 100 years after Plassey, the greased cartridges and so forth, was superb, Northcliffe might have learnt from it, Goebbels would have envied it ; and, while the Moslems have never been good at propaganda, the high-caste Hindus have always excelled in it. The staff-work of the Mutiny was puerile : and staff-work, while often good and sometimes excel-

lent among the Moslems, has never been a quality of the Hindus. And, finally, where as there have been historical instances of the Hindus, who are persuasive people, persuading the Moslems to do this or that or the other, there has never been an instance of Moslems persuading the Hindus to do anything, except at the point of the sword, the only kind of argument they really understand.

It would seem, therefore, judging from the way they worked, that the brains behind the Mutiny were Hindu brains and that assumption fits all the facts. The Brahmins, the highest of high Hindu castes, are the subtlest intriguers and the cleverest propagandists in history. They believe quite sincerely, and always have believed, that they are "the twice-born sons of God" destined to rule not only India but the world and, throughout Indian history from Kautilya in the fourth century B.C. to Gandhi in the twentieth century A.D., they have always plotted against the government in power, Buddhist, Mohammedan or British, with that end in view. But they have always been physical cowards, allergic to violence; they have directed the sword but they have never wielded the sword. The English, as they knew only too well, were fighting men of the first order; they must find fighting men to cope with them. It was easy to persuade the warriors of their own creed, the Rajputs and the Mahrattas: they had merely to crack the whip of religion, to point to the abolition of *Sati* and the ignoring of the rights of adoption. It was not so easy with the Moslems, so they used the bait of a restored Moghul Empire, reckoning that, as they had destroyed it before by the instrument of the Mahrattas, so they could destroy it again: and it proved impossible with the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, whose original Hinduism had been watered down to such an extent that they no longer admitted Brahmin infallibility. But these defections, disappointing though they might be, still left them with very considerable forces, far outnumbering those of their

enemy. They decided to defeat the English by force of arms.

Here let it be said in parenthesis that this policy was a mistake. It is always a mistake to choose a weapon in the use of which your enemy is particularly skilled, especially when you yourself are so feeble in its use that you have to bribe and persuade others to wield it for you : more especially still, when you possess a weapon in the use of which your enemy is extremely unskilful. The Brahmins, who at least never give up trying, having dismally failed to drive the English out of India with cold steel, set to work anew and, less than a century later, have driven them out with the subtler weapons of casuistry and argument.

But to return to the Mutiny. Having got their armed forces, the Brahmins needed a slogan. All revolutions need a slogan and, generally speaking, the more mendacious the slogan the more successful it is ; and the English, kindly and rather characteristically, handed them a slogan almost ready made.

At the beginning of 1857, the Enfield rifle was issued to the troops with cartridges for use therein : and in these cartridges the percussion caps were covered with greased paper which had to be torn off with the teeth when loading. In a land where ceremonial purity means so much, even the clumsiest of propagandists could have made capital out of that, and the Brahmins are not clumsy. They told the Moslems, to whom the pig is an unclean animal, that the grease was pig's fat ; they told the Hindus, to whom the cow is a sacred animal, that it was cow's fat ; they told both that it was all a plot on the part of the missionaries to christianise India, and even quoted an entirely fictitious petition alleged to have been made by these same missionaries to Queen Victoria.

"Your Majesty," runs this interesting document, "has not made one Christian. Under your orders

are Sepoys of all castes. We therefore pray you to adopt this plan—namely to cause to be mixed up together bullock's fat and pig's fat and have it put upon the cartridges which your Sepoys put into their mouths, and after six months to have it made known to the Sepoys how they have thereby lost their caste, and by this means a certain road will be opened for making many Christians."

They added, presumably on the principle that if you are going to tell a lie at all it had better be an absolutely colossal lie, that the Queen was delighted with the idea. Queen Victoria ! But equally absurd stories are broadcast by Congress to-day—and believed not only in India, but in England.

Meanwhile Lord Dalhousie had retired, Lord Canning, succeeding him, had expressed in the now conventional manner of all Governor-Generals his confident belief in "a peaceful term of office" and had come out to India to face "a small cloud," as he phrased it in a moment of rather prophetic understatement, "which, growing larger and larger, may at last threaten to burst and overwhelm us in ruin."

It did not merely "threaten to burst" : it burst and the explosion shook the edifice of English supremacy in India to its foundations. But it burst prematurely, a fact which did not save the Company, but did much to save England. Whoever the chief conspirators may have been, it has been established beyond doubt that the outbreak was timed to start, all over Northern India, on May 31st. But already on February 27th, 1857, two days before Lord Canning arrived in Calcutta, the first rumblings of the storm were heard at Berhampore, where the 19th Native Infantry refused to handle the cartridges. It was settled without bloodshed, and the 19th were marched down to Barrackpore (where there were two British regiments) to be disarmed : and here, on March 29th, a *bhang*-intoxicated Hindu Sepoy of the 34th Infantry, Mungul Pandey, who gave his

name to all the mutineers to follow,\* fired the first shot of the Mutiny, wounding an English subaltern and an English sergeant-major. He was ruthlessly ridden down by Brigadier-General Hearsey, to be subsequently court-martialled and shot, while his regiment, together with the 19th, was disarmed.

The initial outbreak was, in short, suppressed with ease: and the conspirators may well have been delighted, for that very ease of suppression lulled the English (save a few far-sighted men like the Lawrences) into a sense of security which was exactly what the conspirators wanted. They were not ready yet, though the mysterious *chupatties* (flat unleavened cakes) were passing from hand to hand like the fiery cross of Scotland: though the *panchayats*, the regimental committees, were being deluged with propaganda: though women, from queens like Zeenat Mahal in Delhi, ambitious for the restoration of her husband's Imperial power, and the Rani of Jhansi, embittered by the "lapse" of her kingdom, to the harlots of the bazaars, were busy suborning the fighting men: though the "Devil's Wind"† was blowing with ever-increasing strength along the Ganges valley.

They were not ready on May 10th. But it is easier to rouse by lies and false rumours the passions of ignorant men than it is to control them by a scheduled programme when roused. At Meerut, Colonel Carmichael-Smyth, commanding the 3rd Bengal Cavalry (almost entirely recruited from Oudh), was not going to "stand any damned nonsense" about cartridges. They were issued to the regiment, and 87 troopers who refused to handle them were publicly degraded and put in irons. Their comrades mutinied almost to a man, massacre and rape and arson

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\* The British soldier, with his passion for nicknames, thenceforward always referred to the rebels as "Pandies."

† Bahadur Shah's explanation of the Mutiny was that "the Devil's Wind" had blown across Northern India.

stormed unchecked through the city, while the British regiments, the Carabineers and the 60th Rifles were kept inactive in their lines by the almost incredible cowardice and supineness of the general officer commanding, Hewitt. The 11th and 20th Native Infantry Regiments joined in and, after a night of terror, the mutineers marched away to Delhi, where they repeated their atrocities with embellishments, including the public rape of English women in the streets, by order of the Moghul Princes, and proclaimed that aged opium-sodden poetaster, Ghazi-ud-Din Bahadur Shah, last of the Moghuls, Emperor of India. The Mutiny had begun : three weeks before the conspirators were ready.

That three weeks saved India, for a curious, yet under the circumstances not unnatural, lull followed the outbreaks at Delhi and Meerut, during which the disaffected regiments at other stations wondered uneasily whether to revolt at once or to wait the appointed date : during which the English performed their usual miracles of inspired improvisation with which they always greet the outbreak of wars for which they are never by any chance ready. Lord Canning showed himself to be a worthy successor of Clive and Wellesley ; he cabled the Governor of Bombay to hasten the return of British troops from the Persian war : he gave dictatorial powers to Sir John Lawrence in the Punjab ; he recalled regiments from Rangoon and Madras ; and he diverted to India the expeditionary force that was proceeding from England to China. Men who, unlike Hewitt, were neither cowardly nor supine, ruthlessly disarmed suspected regiments, men like John Nicholson and Daly and Herbert Edwardes and Reid won the confidence and loyalty of the fighting tribes of the North-West and the North-East. John Lawrence, by some miracle of tact and firmness, secured the co-operation of the Sikhs. The survivors of the Delhi massacres clung grimly to the Ridge outside ;

had in fact the immortal impertinence, so typically English, to besiege the Royal city, though the besieged were far superior in numbers and equipment.

The lull ended and on or about the appointed date, May 31st, in a score and more of places throughout the Ganges valley, the smouldering embers burst into flame. But there was no co-ordination in these outbreaks, no co-operation among those that were successful, the staff-work of the mutineers was atrocious. By every law of strategy and common-sense they should have concentrated their very considerable strength, seventy battalions, twenty cavalry regiments and most of the artillery in Northern India, at Delhi, the focal point of the Mutiny, and waited for the Punjab, only conquered eight years previously, to rise and join them. Instead, each separate mutiny, with very few exceptions, went its own sweet way regardless of the others.

The Cawnpore Brigade and the troops of the Nana Sahib, the heir, if only by adoption, of the great Mahratta chiefs, stayed to besiege the tiny British garrison; and this garrison, after a short but incredibly gallant resistance on about the worst possible site chosen by their seventy-four-year old commander, Sir Hugh Wheeler, surrendered, trusting to the word of the Nana Sahib. They received the usual reward of the over-credulous. Instead of the "comfortable river journey" to Allahabad which he promised, the boats were fired upon and fired, the survivors among the men were shot down in cold blood, the women and children, some two hundred in number, were shut up in a dirty native house, the *Bibi Gahr*, fed on filthy food served by men of the lowest caste, the worst insult a Hindu can offer: and, when vengeance in the shape of Havelock's flying column drew near, four butchers went into that little house armed with the long knives of their trade and cut and thrust and slashed till the walls were running red and the cheap matting underfoot was spongy with blood; and finally threw the

wretched bodies, dead or still breathing, into a disused well in the compound. Small wonder that from that day onwards Havelock's troops, and indeed every Englishman in India, to say nothing of Sikhs and Gurkhas, saw red and performed such miracles of valour against tremendous odds as can only be inspired by a fanatical desire for revenge.

Another large force stayed to besiege the Residency at Lucknow. But Sir Henry Lawrence was a man of very different calibre to Sir Hugh Wheeler and, although he himself was killed by a shell on the first day of the siege, the Residency, faithful to his dying wish, did not surrender. It did not surrender though its garrison, one thousand Englishmen, seven hundred loyal Indians and six hundred women and children were encircled by more than forty thousand mutineers; though the Residency and adjoining buildings where they took refuge hardly even pretended to be a fortress but was surrounded on every side by high Hindu houses, sometimes only thirteen yards distant, making excellent sniper's posts; though the mutineers had a tremendous preponderance of artillery and brought up their heavy siege guns to fire at point blank range; though the temperature stood at 120 in the shade and there was little shade within those crumbling walls until the Rains came with their "deluge of cataract skies," an almost worse infliction; though the mutineers shouted that they were the last English to be left alive in India and no word came through to disprove this encouraging assertion; though they had no hospital, no medical supplies, no water—every drop had been brought at night from outside through the enemy lines—and, towards the end, fast-failing ammunition. The garrison had expected to hold out for fifteen days at the utmost; before they were relieved by Havelock and Outram—and that was a reinforcement rather than a relief—they had held out for eighty-eight days, held out against constant bombardment and incessant musketry fire, against innumerable mines and frequent



fierce assaults, against heat and hunger and thirst and disease and despair.

“And ever above the topmost roof our banner of England blew.”

For the defence of Lucknow did more than add a great epic to the library of history ; it broke the back of the Mutiny. If those 40,000 mutineers had been free to reinforce Delhi, Delhi might never have been recaptured and the crux of the whole situation was this ; could we recapture Delhi before the Punjab got out of hand ? John Lawrence, worthy brother to Sir Henry, kept it quiet by some miracle of genius through all that ghastly summer, but in September he telegraphed to John Nicholson, in command of the troops on the Ridge, to the effect that he could not guarantee to hold any longer unless Delhi fell : so Nicholson, one of the outstanding figures of that heroic age, with 11,000 men, of whom only 3,000 were British, attacked a city “ seven miles in circumference, filled with an immense fanatical population, garrisoned by fully 40,000 soldiers, with 114 pieces of artillery, with the largest magazine of shot, shell and ammunition in the Upper Provinces, besides some sixteen pieces of field artillery.”\* And after a week of furious fighting, in which he himself lost his life, took it by storm. Bahadur Shah surrendered, the princes who had ordered those atrocities on English women were captured and shot out of hand by Hodson of Hodson’s Horse ; an act of summary justice which naturally appalled the sentimentalists at home : English supremacy in India was saved.

But it had yet to be fully asserted. Lucknow had been reinforced rather than relieved by Outram and Havelock. They had fought their way in ; burdened with women and children and wounded, they could

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\* Letter from General Archdale Wilson to the O.C. Royal Engineers.

not fight their way out. But on November 17<sup>th</sup>, Sir Colin Campbell, that grim old Crimean veteran, finally relieved and evacuated it : performed the amazing feat of transporting a column 14 miles long, including many non-combatants, through fifty miles of hostile country infested with mutineers in far greater numbers : got back to Cawnpore just in time to save General Windham and smash the Gwalior contingent, the most efficient and dreaded army that the Mutiny produced : and then, returning to Lucknow, stormed that savage city on March 21st, 1858, and finally subjugated Oudh, which had been largely the cause of the Mutiny and to a great extent its core.

Meanwhile in Central India, Sir Hugh Rose, commanding the Nerbudda field force of 6,000 men (2,500 British), had captured Rathgar, one of the strongest fortresses in India and relieved Saugur, where a British garrison had held out for six months : and now followed up these successes with the storming of Jhansi on April 2nd and the crushing defeat at Kalpi on June 19th of Tantia Topi, the ablest general on the rebel side that the Mutiny produced, and the Rani of Jhansi, "the best *man* on the side of the enemy" who died under the sabres of the 8th Hussars leading her squadrons and fighting to the last like the ferocious tigress that she was. The Mutiny, save for a few "mopping-up" operations, was at an end.

The foregoing chapter has not attempted to give anything but a very short sketch of the general outlines of this tremendous crisis, omitting all details of amazing battles and almost incredible sieges, of queer treacheries and topsy-turvy loyalties, of cruelty and bad faith on the one side, of heroism and unfaltering determination on the other. For such the reader is referred to the many excellent histories of the Mutiny as a whole and of particular campaigns and sieges therein, or, if he prefers his history in the form of fiction, to Mrs. Steele's magnificent book *On the Face of the Waters*, or the author's own *Masque of Mutiny*.

<sup>u</sup> But no sketch, however brief, would be complete without one further comment on the political side : whoever the conspirators may have been and whatever their intentions, the Indian Mutiny was a *local affair*.

This fact cannot be over emphasised to-day when ignorant people are rather apt to describe it as the first effort to throw off a hated foreign yoke made by an united nation : then as now, there was not one nation in India, but more than 200 different nations anything but united.

Territorially speaking, the Mutiny was confined entirely to the Ganges Valley from Delhi to Patna, roughly the area to-day known as the United Provinces with a slight Southern extension embracing Gwalior, Jhansi and Saugur, a very small fraction of the vast acreage of India. Over the rest of the Peninsula nothing stirred, and even in the affected areas the villagers who should, one feels, have given at least passive support to this "national uprising" were as a general rule helpful to their "oppressors," or, at worst, as completely uninterested in this patriotic movement as the average Indian village to-day is uninterested in *Swaraj* and "*ek ho*" \* and Pakistan, in the garrulity of Mr. Gandhi or the political gymnastics of Mr. Jinnah.

From the military standpoint, this revolution, so far as the Company's armies were concerned, was confined entirely to the Bengal Army ; admittedly the most important but not the only force they possessed. The Madras and Bombay armies remained loyal almost to a man,† and even in the Bengal Army there were many instances not only of individuals, but of whole regiments, 8 cavalry and 28 infantry, remaining loyal to their English masters or disloyal

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\* "Be one." Slogan shouted by Bombay mob at the time of the Indian Navy mutiny in March, 1946.

† The 8th Madras Cavalry refused to march and were disarmed without bloodshed.

to their Indian friends, whichever way one likes to put it. Of the state troops, those of the Emperor, the Nana Sahib and Jhansi, the Jodhpore Legion and the Kotah contingent took part in the revolt from the first and were joined later, in spite of great efforts to save them from folly made by the Prime Minister, Dinkar Rao, by the Gwalior Contingent who, in characteristic Indian fashion threw in their considerable weight, one battery, one cavalry regiment and seven infantry battalions, too late to turn the scale as they might have done had they declared themselves earlier : and the Nagpore contingent was suspect and had to be partially disarmed.

Otherwise the Princes of India, great and small, independent and subsidiary, remained faithful to their treaties. Dost Mohammed of Afghanistan who, having been "by turns the rejected friend, the enforced enemy, the honourable prisoner, the vindictive assailant" of the English, might have been justified in regarding them with somewhat mixed feelings, when pressed by his priests to proclaim a Holy War, retorted, "I have now made an alliance with the British Government and come what may I will keep it till death"; and did. The Nizam of Hyderabad, by far the most important of the subsidiary Princes, influenced by his great minister, Salar Jung, not only observed his treaty obligations but put his Contingent, the best of the purely Indian (though British-officered) armies, 4 batteries, 4 cavalry regiments, 4 infantry battalions, at the disposal of the Governor-General. Mysore, Travancore, the newly created state of Kashmir, most of the states of Rajputana followed suit. The Gurkhas forgot Sagauli, the Sikhs forgot Sobraon and Gujerat and rendered yeoman service on a hundred battlefields : and, if many of these faithful allies were Moslems who might be expected to turn a deaf ear to Brahmin blandishments, as many were Hindus who might not.

Here certainly was no cohesive country unanimously striving for independence, no united nation

rising as one man against the oppression : and, if the vast majority of the Company's subjects thus maintained their allegiance in spite of every inducement, religious, military and political, to do just the reverse, it can hardly be argued that the Company's rule had been extortionate and oppressive.

But, good, bad or indifferent, it was drawing fast to its close.

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